

Renegade
Press PRESENTS

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JUL

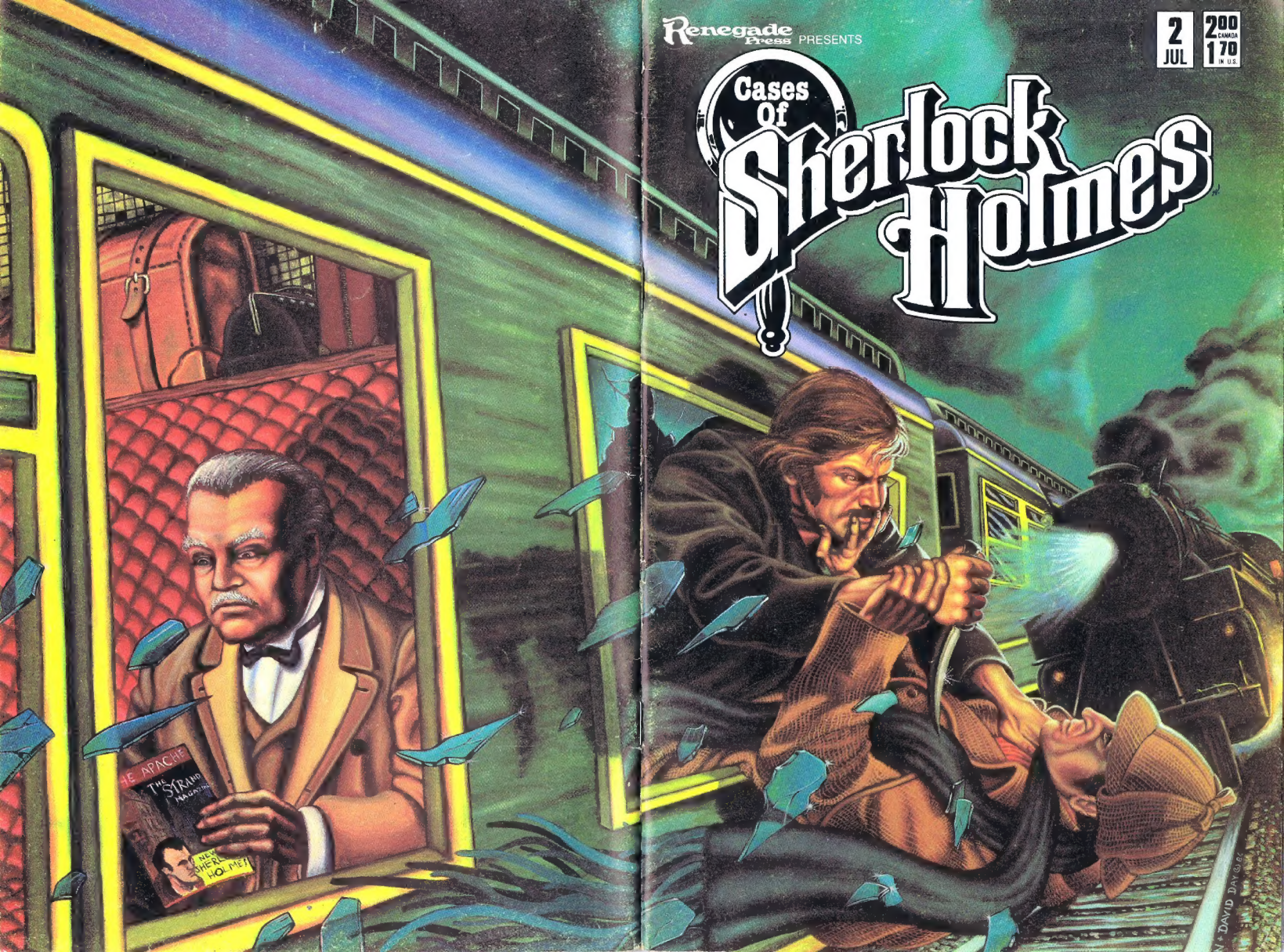
200
CANADA
170
IN U.S.

Cases
Of

Sherlock Holmes



N + DAVID DAY © 2000



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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Just a short note to our readers. Renegade is real busy getting ready for the convention season, as I write this. Because of this, I haven't really found the time to write a **real** editorial. But, just to let you know you're not forgotten I'm sending this note to the printers. If you can make it to one of the conventions listed below, we would love to see you. I promise that next month's editorial (which I am already working on) will have more to it. See you soon!

Deni

RENEGADE APPEARANCES JULY 4-6 CHICAGO COMICCON

Michael Cherkas (The Silent Invasion)
Larry Hancock (The Silent Invasion)
Max Collins (Ms. Tree)
Terry Beatty (Ms. Tree)
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)

Joe Judt (Strata)
Ray Murtaugh (Strata)
Jim Brozman (Strata)
David Darrigo (Wordsmith)
Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)
Deni Loubert (Publisher)

JULY 25-27 ATLANTA FANTASY FAIR

Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)

Joe Sinardi (Maxwell Mouse Follies)
Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)

JULY 31 - AUG 3 SAN DIEGO COMICCON

Michael Cherkas (The Silent Invasion)
Larry Hancock (The Silent Invasion)
Joe Judt (Strata)
Ray Murtaugh (Strata)
Jim Brozman (Strata)
Max Collins (Ms. Tree)
Terry Beatty (Ms. Tree)

David Darrigo (Wordsmith)
Barb Rausch (Neil & Vicky)
Bob Burden (Flaming Carrot)
Dan Day (Cases of Sherlock Holmes)
Dennis Mallonee (Eternity Smith)
Rick Hoberg (Eternity Smith)
Deni Loubert (Publisher)

Please note that there will be a cocktail party at the Golden Apple Comic Shop, 7711 Melrose Ave. in Los Angeles on Tuesday August 5th. It will be hosted by The Golden Apple and Renegade Press as an informal get together for fans to talk to the artists and to see how a company like Renegade survives. Everyone from Renegade will be there (with the exception of R.G. Taylor from Wordsmith). It will run from 7-9 p.m., and probably spill over into the nearest bar, if I know Renegade. Everyone is welcome to come. Bring your friends, even if they don't read comics!!



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Dan & David Day

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Deni Loubert

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Renegade Logo Design by Dave Roman

the ADVENTURE of the DANCING MEN

by Sir ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

illustrated by

THOMAS ARTHUR DANIEL DAY

HOLMES HAD BEEN SEATED FOR SOME HOURS IN SILENCE WITH HIS LONG, THIN BACK CURVED OVER A CHEMICAL VESSEL IN WHICH HE WAS BREWING A PARTICULARLY MALODOROUS PRODUCT. HIS HEAD WAS SUNK UPON HIS BREAST, AND HE LOOKED FROM MY POINT OF VIEW LIKE A STRANGE, LANK BIRD, WITH DULL GREY PLUMAGE AND A BLACK TOP-KNOT.





"SO, WATSON," SAID HE, SUDDENLY, "YOU DO NOT PROPOSE TO INVEST IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECURITIES?"

I GAVE A START OF ASTONISHMENT. ACCUSTOMED AS I WAS TO HOLMES'S CURIOUS FACULTIES, THIS SUDDEN INTRUSION INTO MY MOST INTIMATE THOUGHTS WAS UTTERLY INEXPLICABLE.

"HOW ON EARTH DO YOU KNOW THAT?" I ASKED.

HE WHEELED ROUND UPON HIS STOOL, WITH A STEAMING TEST-TUBE IN HIS HAND AND A GLEAM OF AMUSEMENT IN HIS DEEP-SET EYES.

"NOW, WATSON, CONFESS YOURSELF UTTERLY TAKEN ABACK," SAID HE.

"I AM."

"I OUGHT TO MAKE YOU SIGN A PAPER TO THAT EFFECT."

"WHY?"

"BECAUSE IN FIVE MINUTES YOU WILL SAY THAT IT IS ALL SO ABSURDLY SIMPLE."

"I AM SURE THAT I SHALL SAY NOTHING OF THE KIND."

"YOU SEE, MY DEAR WATSON" — HE PROPPED HIS TEST-TUBE IN THE RACK AND BEGAN TO LECTURE WITH THE AIR OF A PROFESSOR ADDRESSING HIS CLASS — "IT IS NOT REALLY DIFFICULT TO CONSTRUCT A SERIES OF INFERENCES, EACH DEPENDENT UPON ITS PREDECESSOR AND EACH SIMPLE IN ITSELF. IF, AFTER DOING SO, ONE SIMPLY KNOCKS OUT ALL THE CENTRAL INFERENCES AND PRESENTS ONE'S AUDIENCE WITH THE STARTING-POINT AND THE CONCLUSION, ONE MAY PRODUCE A STARTLING, THOUGH POSSIBLY A MERETRICKIOUS, EFFECT. NOW, IT WAS NOT REALLY DIFFICULT, BY AN INSPECTION OF THE GROOVE BETWEEN YOUR LEFT FORE-FINGER AND THUMB, TO FEEL SURE THAT YOU DID NOT PROPOSE TO INVEST YOUR SMALL CAPITAL IN THE GOLDFIELDS."

"I SEE NO CONNECTION."

"VERY LIKELY NOT; BUT I CAN QUICKLY SHOW YOU A CLOSE CONNECTION. HERE ARE THE MISSING LINKS OF THE VERY SIMPLE CHAIN: 1. YOU HAD CHALK BETWEEN YOUR LEFT FINGER AND THUMB WHEN YOU RETURNED FROM THE CLUB LAST NIGHT. 2. YOU PUT CHALK THERE WHEN YOU PLAY BILLIARDS TO STEADY THE CUE. 3. YOU NEVER PLAY BILLIARDS EXCEPT WITH THURSTON. 4. YOU TOLD ME FOUR WEEKS AGO THAT THURSTON HAD AN OPTION ON SOME SOUTH AFRICAN PROPERTY WHICH WOULD EXPIRE IN A MONTH, AND WHICH HE DESIRED YOU TO SHARE WITH HIM. 5. YOUR CHEQUE-BOOK IS LOCKED IN MY DRAWER, AND YOU HAVE NOT ASKED FOR THE KEY. 6. YOU DO NOT PROPOSE TO INVEST YOUR MONEY IN THIS MANNER."

"HOW ABSURDLY SIMPLE!" I CRIED.



"QUITE SO!" SAID HE, A LITTLE NETTLED. "EVERY PROBLEM BECOMES VERY CHILDISH WHEN ONCE IT IS EXPLAINED TO YOU. HERE IS AN UNEXPLAINED ONE. SEE WHAT YOU CAN MAKE OF THAT, FRIEND WATSON." HE TOSSED A SHEET OF PAPER UPON THE TABLE AND TURNED ONCE MORE TO HIS CHEMICAL ANALYSIS.

I LOOKED WITH AMAZEMENT AT THE ABSURD HIEROGLYPHICS UPON THE PAPER.

"WHY, HOLMES, IT IS A CHILD'S DRAWING," I CRIED.

"OH, THAT'S YOUR IDEA!"

"WHAT ELSE SHOULD IT BE?"

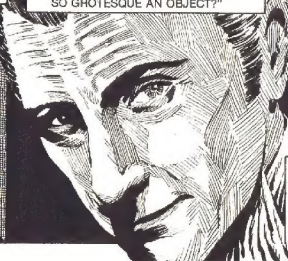
"THAT IS WHAT MR. HILTON CUBITT, OF RIDLING THORPE MANOR, NORFOLK, IS VERY ANXIOUS TO KNOW. THIS LITTLE CON-UNDRUM CAME BY THE FIRST POST, AND HE WAS TO FOLLOW BY THE NEXT TRAIN. THERE'S A RING AT THE BELL, WATSON. I SHOULD NOT BE VERY MUCH SURPRISED IF THIS WERE HE."



A HEAVY STEP WAS HEARD UPON THE STAIRS, AND AN INSTANT LATER THERE ENTERED A TALL, RUDDY, CLEAN-SHAVEN GENTLEMAN, WHOSE CLEAR EYES AND FLORID CHEEKS TOLD OF A LIFE LED FAR FROM THE FOGS OF BAKER STREET. HE SEEMED TO BRING A WHIFF OF HIS STRONG, FRESH, BRACING, EAST-COAST AIR WITH HIM AS HE ENTERED, HAVING SHAKEN HANDS WITH EACH OF US, HE WAS ABOUT TO SIT DOWN WHEN HIS EYES RESTED UPON THE PAPER WITH THE CURIOUS MARKINGS, WHICH I HAD JUST EXAMINED AND LEFT UPON THE TABLE.

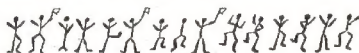
"WELL, MR. HOLMES, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THESE?" HE CRIED. "THEY TOLD ME THAT YOU WERE FOND OF QUEER MYSTERIES, AND I DON'T THINK YOU CAN FIND A QUEERER ONE THAN THAT. I SENT THE PAPER ON AHEAD SO THAT YOU MIGHT HAVE TIME TO STUDY IT BEFORE I CAME."

"IT IS CERTAINLY RATHER A CURIOUS PRODUCTION," SAID HOLMES. "AT FIRST SIGHT IT WOULD APPEAR TO BE SOME CHILDISH PRANK. IT CONSISTS OF A NUMBER OF ABSURD LITTLE FIGURES DANCING ACROSS THE PAPER UPON WHICH THEY ARE DRAWN. WHY SHOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE ANY IMPORTANCE TO SO GROTESQUE AN OBJECT?"



"I NEVER SHOULD, MR. HOLMES, BUT MY WIFE DOES. IT IS FRIGHTENING HER TO DEATH. SHE SAYS NOTHING, BUT I CAN SEE TERROR IN HER EYES. THAT'S WHY I WANT TO SIFT THE MATTER TO THE BOTTOM."

HOLMES HELD UP THE PAPER SO THAT THE SUNLIGHT SHONE FULL UPON IT. IT WAS, A PAGE TORN FROM A NOTE-BOOK. THE MARKINGS WERE DONE IN PENCIL AND RAN IN THIS WAY: —





HOLMES EXAMINED IT FOR SOME TIME, AND THEN, FOLDING IT CAREFULLY UP, HE PLACED IT IN HIS POCKET-BOOK.

"THIS PROMISES TO BE A MOST INTERESTING AND UNUSUAL CASE," SAID HE. "YOU GAVE ME A FEW PARTICULARS IN YOUR LETTER, MR. HILTON CUBITT, BUT I SHOULD BE VERY MUCH OBLIGED IF YOU WOULD KINDLY GO OVER IT ALL AGAIN FOR THE BENEFIT OF MY FRIEND, DR. WATSON."

"I'M NOT MUCH OF A STORY-TELLER," SAID OUR VISITOR, NER-

VOUSLY CLASPING AND UNCLASPING HIS GREAT, STRONG HANDS. "YOU'LL JUST ASK ME ANYTHING THAT I DON'T MAKE CLEAR, I'LL BEGIN AT THE TIME OF MY MARRIAGE LAST YEAR, BUT I WANT TO SAY FIRST OF ALL THAT, THOUGH I'M NOT A RICH MAN, MY PEOPLE HAVE BEEN AT RIDING THORPE FOR A MATTER OF FIVE CENTURIES, AND THERE IS NO BETTER-KNOWN FAMILY IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK. LAST YEAR I CAME UP TO LONDON FOR THE JUBILEE, AND I STOPPED AT A BOARDING-HOUSE IN RUSSELL SQUARE, BECAUSE PARKER, THE VICAR OF OUR PARISH, WAS STAYING IN IT. THERE WAS AN AMERICAN YOUNG LADY THERE — PATRICK WAS THE NAME — ELSE PATRICK, IN SOME WAY WE BECAME FRIENDS, UNTIL BEFORE MY MONTH WAS UP I WAS AS MUCH IN LOVE AS A MAN COULD BE. WE WERE QUIETLY MARRIED AT A REGISTRY OFFICE, AND WE RETURNED TO NORFOLK A WEDDED COUPLE. YOU'LL THINK IT VERY MAD, MR. HOLMES, THAT A MAN OF A GOOD OLD FAMILY SHOULD MARRY A WIFE IN THIS FASHION, KNOWING NOTHING OF HER

PAST OR OF HER PEOPLE; BUT IF YOU SAW HER AND KNEW HER IT WOULD HELP YOU TO UNDERSTAND.

"SHE WAS VERY STRAIGHT ABOUT IT, WAS ELsie, I CAN'T SAY THAT SHE DID NOT GIVE ME EVERY CHANGE OF GETTING OUT OF IT IF I WISHED TO DO. I HAVE HAD SOME VERY DISAGREEABLE ASSOCIATIONS IN MY LIFE; SAID SHE; 'I WISH TO FORGET ALL ABOUT THEM. I WOULD RATHER NEVER ALLUDE TO THE PAST, FOR IT IS VERY PAINFUL TO ME IF YOU TAKE ME, HILTON, YOU WILL TAKE A WOMAN WHO HAS NOTHING THAT SHE NEEDS TO BE PERSONALLY ASHAMED OF; BUT YOU WILL HAVE TO BE CONTENT WITH MY WORD FOR IT, AND TO ALLOW ME TO BE SILENT AS TO ALL THAT PASSED UP TO THE TIME WHEN I BECAME YOURS. IF THESE CONDITIONS ARE TOO HARD, THEN GO BACK TO NORFOLK AND LEAVE ME TO THE LONELY LIFE IN WHICH YOU FOUND ME; IT WAS ONLY THE DAY BEFORE OUR WEDDING THAT SHE SAID THOSE VERY WORDS TO ME. TOLD HER THAT I WAS CONTENT TO TAKE HER ON HER OWN TERMS, AND I HAVE BEEN AS GOOD AS MY WORD.

"WELL, WE HAVE BEEN MARRIED NOW FOR A YEAR, AND VERY HAPPY WE HAVE BEEN, BUT ABOUT A MONTH AGO, AT THE END OF JUNE, I SAW FOR THE FIRST TIME SIGNS OF TROUBLE. ONE DAY MY WIFE RECEIVED A LETTER FROM AMERICA. I SAW THE AMERICAN STAMP. SHE TURNED DEADLY WHITE, READ

THE LETTER, AND THREW IT INTO THE FIRE. SHE MADE NO ALLUSION TO IT AFTERWARDS, AND I MADE NONE, FOR A PROMISE IS A PROMISE; BUT SHE HAS NEVER KNOWN AN EASY HOUR FROM THAT MOMENT. THERE IS ALWAYS A LOOK OF FEAR UPON HER FACE — A LOOK AS IF SHE WERE WAITING AND EXPECTING. SHE WOULD DO BETTER TO TRUST ME. SHE WOULD FIND THAT I WAS HER BEST FRIEND, BUT UNTIL SHE SPEAKS I CAN SAY NOTHING. MIND YOU, SHE IS A TRUTHFUL WOMAN, MR. HOLMES, AND WHATEVER TROUBLE THERE MAY HAVE BEEN IN HER PAST LIFE IT HAS BEEN NO FAULT OF HERS. I AM ONLY A SIMPLE NORFOLK SQUIRE. THERE IS NOT A MAN IN ENGLAND WHO RANKS HIS FAMILY HONOUR MORE HIGHLY THAN

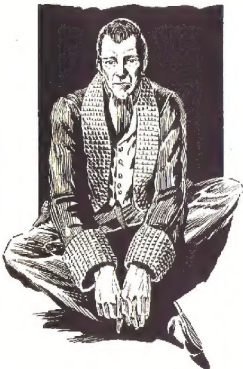
I DO. SHE KNOWS IT WELL, AND SHE KNEW IT WELL BEFORE SHE MARRIED ME. SHE WOULD NEVER BRING ANY STAIN UPON IT — OF THAT I AM SURE.

"WELL, NOW I COME TO THE QUEER PART OF MY STORY. ABOUT A WEEK AGO — IT WAS THE TUESDAY LAST WEEK — I FOUND ON ONE OF THE WINDOW SILLS A NUMBER OF ABSURD LITTLE DANCING FIGURES, LIKE THESE UPON THE PAPER. THEY WERE SCRAWLED WITH CHALK. I THOUGHT THAT IT WAS THE STABLE-BOY WHO HAD DRAWN THEM, BUT THE LAD SWORE HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT IT. ANYHOW, THEY HAD COME THERE DURING THE NIGHT. I HAD THEM WASHED OUT, AND I ONLY MENTIONED THE MATTER TO MY WIFE AFTERWARDS. TO MY SURPRISE SHE TOOK IT VERY SERIOUSLY, AND BEGGED ME IF ANY MORE CAME TO LET HER SEE THEM. NONE DID COME FOR A WEEK, AND THEN YESTERDAY MORNING I FOUND THIS PAPER LYING ON THE SUNLIL IN THE GARDEN. I SHOWED IT TO ELsie, AND DOWN SHE DROPPED IN A DEAD FAINT. SINCE THEN SHE HAS LOOKED LIKE A WOMAN IN A DREAM, HALF DAZED, AND WITH TERROR ALWAYS LURKING IN HER EYES. IT WAS THEN THAT I WROTE AND SENT THE PAPER TO YOU, MR. HOLMES. IT WAS NOT A THING THAT I COULD TAKE TO THE POLICE, FOR THEY WOULD HAVE LAUGHED AT ME, BUT YOU WILL TELL ME WHAT TO DO. I AM NOT A RICH MAN, BUT IF THERE IS ANY DANGER THREATENING MY LITTLE WOMAN I WOULD SPEND MY LAST COPPER TO SHIELD HER."

HE WAS A FINE CREATURE, THIS MAN OF OLD ENGLISH SOIL, SIMPLE, STRAIGHT, AND GENTLE, WITH HIS GREAT, EARNEST BLUE EYES AND BROAD, COMELY FACE. HIS LOVE FOR HIS WIFE AND HIS TRUST IN HER SHONE IN HIS FEATURES. HOLMES HAD LISTENED TO HIS STORY WITH THE UTMOST ATTENTION, AND NOW HE SAT FOR SOME TIME IN SILENT THOUGHT.



"DON'T YOU THINK, MR. CUBITT," SAID HE, AT LAST, "THAT YOUR BEST PLAN WOULD BE TO MAKE A DIRECT APPEAL TO YOUR WIFE, AND TO ASK HER TO SHARE HER SECRET WITH YOU?"



HILTON CUBITT SHOOK HIS MASSIVE HEAD.

"A PROMISE IS A PROMISE, MR. HOLMES. IF ELSIE WISHED TO TELL ME SHE WOULD. IF NOT, IT IS NOT FOR ME TO FORCE HER CONFIDENCE. BUT I AM JUSTIFIED IN TAKING MY OWN LINE — AND I WILL."



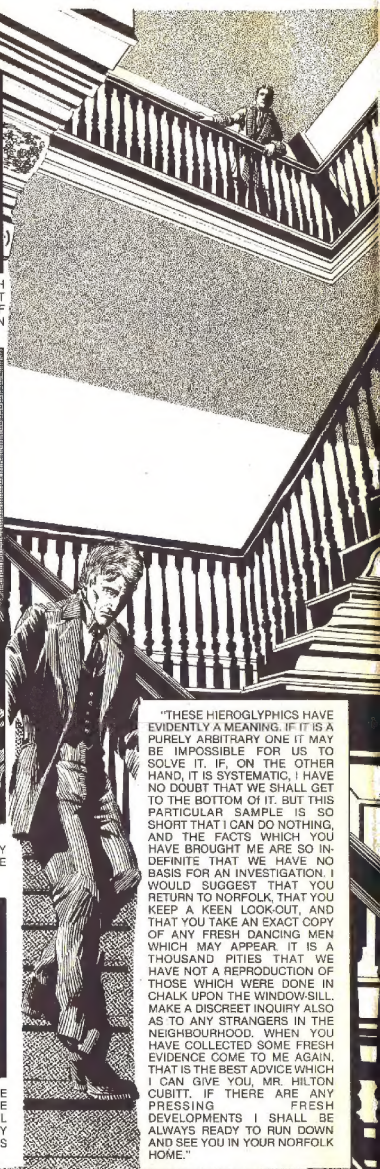
"THEN I WILL HELP YOU WITH ALL MY HEART. IN THE FIRST PLACE, HAVE YOU HEARD OF ANY STRANGERS BEING SEEN IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD?"



"I PRESUME THAT IT IS A VERY QUIET PLACE. ANY FRESH FACE WOULD CAUSE COMMENT?"



"IN THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURHOOD, YES. BUT WE HAVE SEVERAL SMALL WATERING-PLACES NOT VERY FAR AWAY. AND THE FARMERS TAKE IN LODGERS."



"THESE HIEROGLYPHICS HAVE EVIDENTLY A MEANING. IF IT IS A PURELY ARBITRARY ONE IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO SOLVE IT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS SYSTEMATIC, I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT WE SHALL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF IT. BUT THIS PARTICULAR SAMPLE IS SO SHORT THAT I CAN DO NOTHING, AND THE FACTS WHICH YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME ARE SO INDEFINITE THAT WE HAVE NO BASIS FOR AN INVESTIGATION. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT YOU RETURN TO NORFOLK, THAT YOU KEEP A KEEN LOOK-OUT, AND THAT YOU TAKE AN EXACT COPY OF ANY FRESH DANCING MEN WHICH MAY APPEAR. IT IS A THOUSAND PITIES THAT WE HAVE NOT A REPRODUCTION OF THOSE WHICH WERE DONE IN CHALK UPON THE WINDOW-SILL. MAKE A DISCREET INQUIRY ALSO AS TO ANY STRANGERS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD. WHEN YOU HAVE COLLECTED SOME FRESH EVIDENCE COME TO ME AGAIN. THAT IS THE BEST ADVICE WHICH I CAN GIVE YOU, MR. HILTON CUBITT. IF THERE ARE ANY PRESSING DEVELOPMENTS I SHALL BE ALWAYS READY TO RUN DOWN AND SEE YOU IN YOUR NORFOLK HOME."



THE INTERVIEW LEFT SHERLOCK HOLMES VERY THOUGHTFUL, AND SEVERAL TIMES IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS I SAW HIM TAKE HIS SLIP OF PAPER FROM HIS NOTE-BOOK AND LOOK LONG AND EARNESTLY AT THE CURIOUS FIGURES INSCRIBED UPON IT. HE MADE NO ALLUSION TO THE AFFAIR, HOWEVER, UNTIL ONE AFTERNOON A FORTNIGHT OR SO LATER, I WAS GOING OUT WHEN HE CALLED ME BACK.

"YOU HAD BETTER STAY HERE, WATSON."

"WHY?"

"BECAUSE I HAD A WIRE FROM HILTON CUBITT THIS MORNING — YOU REMEMBER HILTON CUBITT, OF THE DANCING MEN? HE WAS TO REACH LIVERPOOL STREET AT ONE-TWENTY. HE MAY BE HERE AT ANY MOMENT. I GATHER FROM HIS WIRE THAT THERE HAVE BEEN SOME NEW INCIDENTS OF IMPORTANCE."

WE HAD NOT LONG TO WAIT, FOR OUR NORFOLK SQUIRE CAME STRAIGHT FROM THE STATION AS FAST AS A HANSOM COULD BRING HIM. HE WAS LOOKING WORRIED AND DEPRESSED, WITH TIRED EYES AND A LINED FOREHEAD.

"IT'S GETTING ON MY NERVES, THIS BUSINESS, MR. HOLMES," SAID HE, AS HE SANK, LIKE A WEARIED MAN, INTO AN ARM-CHAIR. "IT'S BAD ENOUGH TO FEEL THAT YOU ARE SURROUNDED BY UNSEEN, UNKNOWN FOLK, WHO HAVE SOME KIND OF DESIGN UPON YOU; BUT WHEN, IN ADDITION TO THAT, YOU KNOW THAT IT IS JUST KILLING YOUR WIFE BY INCHES, THEN IT BECOMES AS MUCH AS FLESH AND BLOOD CAN ENDURE. SHE'S WEARING AWAY UNDER IT — JUST WEARING AWAY BEFORE MY EYES."

"HAS SHE SAID ANYTHING YET?"

"NO, MR. HOLMES, SHE HAS NOT, AND YET THERE HAVE BEEN TIMES WHEN THE POOR GIRL HAS WANTED TO SPEAK, AND YET COULD NOT QUITE BRING HERSELF TO TAKE THE PLUNGE. I HAVE TRIED TO HELP HER; BUT I DARE SAY I DID IT CLUMSILY, AND SCARED HER OFF FROM IT. SHE HAS SPOKEN ABOUT MY OLD FAMILY, AND OUR REPUTATION IN THE COUNTY, AND OUR PRIDE IN OUR UNSULLIED HONOUR, AND I ALWAYS FELT IT WAS LEADING TO THE POINT; BUT SOMEHOW IT TURNED OFF

BEFORE WE GOT THERE."

"BUT YOU HAVE FOUND OUT SOMETHING FOR YOURSELF?"

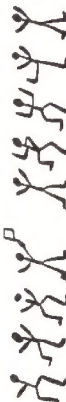
"A GOOD DEAL, MR. HOLMES. I HAVE SEVERAL FRESH DANCING MEN PICTURES FOR YOU TO EXAMINE, AND WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT, I HAVE SEEN THE FELLOW."

"WHAT, THE MAN WHO DRAWS THEM?"

"YES, I SAW HIM AT HIS WORK. BUT I WILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING IN ORDER. WHEN I GOT BACK AFTER MY VISIT TO YOU, THE VERY FIRST THING I SAW NEXT MORNING WAS A FRESH CROP OF DANCING MEN. THEY HAD BEEN DRAWN IN CHALK UPON THE BLACK WOODEN DOOR OF THE TOOL-HOUSE, WHICH STANDS BESIDE THE LAWN IN FULL VIEW OF THE FRONT WINDOWS. I TOOK AN EXACT COPY, AND HERE IT IS." HE UNFOLDED A PAPER AND LAID IT UPON THE TABLE. HERE IS A COPY OF THE HIEROGLYPHICS:—

"EXCELLENT!" SAID HOLMES. "EXCELLENT! PRAY CONTINUE."

"WHEN I HAD TAKEN THE COPY I RUBBED OUT THE MARKS; BUT TWO MORNINGS LATER A FRESH INSCRIPTION HAD APPEARED. I HAVE A COPY OF IT HERE:—



HOLMES RUBBED HIS HANDS AND CHUCKLED WITH DELIGHT. "OUR MATERIAL IS RAPIDLY ACCUMULATING," SAID HE.

"THREE DAYS LATER A MESSAGE WAS LEFT SCRAWLED UPON PAPER, AND PLACED UNDER A PEBBLE UPON THE SUN-DIAL. HERE IT IS, THE CHARACTERS ARE, AS YOU SEE, EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE LAST ONE. AFTER THAT I DETERMINED TO LIE IN WAIT; SO I GOT OUT MY REVOLVER AND I SAT UP IN MY STUDY, WHICH OVERLOOKS THE LAWN AND GARDEN, ABOUT TWO IN THE MORNING. I WAS SEATED BY THE WINDOW, ALL BEING DARK SAVE FOR THE MOONLIGHT OUTSIDE. WHEN I HEARD STEPS BEHIND ME, AND THERE WAS MY WIFE IN HER DRESSING-GOWN. SHE IM-PLORED ME TO COME TO BED. I TOLD HER FRANKLY THAT I WISHED TO SEE WHO IT WAS WHO PLAYED SUCH ABSURD TRICKS UPON US. SHE ANSWERED THAT IT WAS SOME SENSELESS PRACTICAL JOKE, AND THAT I SHOULD NOT TAKE ANY NOTICE OF IT.

"IF IT REALLY ANNOYS YOU, HILTON, WE MIGHT GO AND TRAVEL. YOU AND I, AND SO AVOID THIS NUISANCE!"

"WHAT, BE DRIVEN OUT OF OUR OWN HOUSE BY A PRACTICAL JOKER?" SAID I. "WHY WE SHOULD HAVE THE WHOLE COUNTY LAUGHING AT US."

"WELL, COME TO BED," SAID SHE, "AND WE CAN DISCUSS IT IN THE MORNING."

"SUDDENLY, AS SHE SPOKE, I SAW HER WHITE FACE GROW WHITER YET IN THE MOONLIGHT, AND HER HAND TIGHTENED UPON MY SHOULDER. SOMETHING WAS MOVING IN THE SHADOW OF THE TOOL-HOUSE. I SAW A DARK, CREEPING FIGURE WHICH CRAWLED ROUND THE CORNER AND SQUATTED IN FRONT OF THE DOOR. SEIZING MY PISTOL, I WAS RUSHING OUT, WHEN MY WIFE THREW HER ARMS ROUND ME AND HELD ME WITH CONVULSIVE STRENGTH. I TRIED TO THROW HER OFF, BUT SHE CLUNG TO ME MOST DESPERATELY. AT LAST I GOT CLEAR, BUT BY THE TIME I

HAD OPENED THE DOOR AND REACHED THE HOUSE, THE CREATURE WAS GONE. HE HAD LEFT A TRACE OF HIS PRESENCE, HOWEVER, FOR THERE ON THE DOOR WAS THE VERY SAME ARRANGEMENT OF DANCING MEN WHICH HAD ALREADY TWICE APPEARED, AND WHICH I HAVE COPIED ON THAT PAPER. THERE WAS NO OTHER SIGN OF THE FELLOW ANYWHERE, THOUGH I RAN ALL OVER THE GROUNDS, AND YET THE AMAZING THING IS THAT HE MUST HAVE BEEN THERE ALL THE TIME, FOR WHEN I EXAMINED THE DOOR AGAIN IN THE MORNING HE HAD SCRAWLED SOME MORE OF HIS PICTURES UNDER THE LINE I HAD ALREADY SEEN."

"HAVE YOU THAT FRESH DRAWING?"

"YES; IT IS VERY SHORT, BUT I MADE A COPY OF IT, AND HERE IT IS."

"AGAIN HE PRODUCED A PAPER, THE NEW DANCE WAS IN THIS FORM:—



"TELL ME," SAID HOLMES — AND I COULD SEE BY HIS EYES THAT HE WAS MUCH EXCITED — "WAS THIS A MERE ADDITION TO THE FIRST, OR DID IT APPEAR TO BE ENTIRELY SEPARATE?"

"IT WAS ON A DIFFERENT PANEL OF THE DOOR." EXCELLENT! THIS IS FAR THE MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL FOR OUR PURPOSE, IT FILLS ME WITH HOPES. NOW, MR. HILTON CUBITT, PLEASE CONTINUE YOUR MOST INTERESTING STATEMENT."

"I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY, MR. HOLMES, EXCEPT THAT I WAS ANGRY WITH MY WIFE THAT NIGHT FOR HAVING HELD ME BACK WHEN I MIGHT HAVE CAUGHT THE SKULKING RASCAL. SHE SAID THAT SHE FEARED THAT I MIGHT COME TO HARM. FOR AN INSTANT IT HAD CROSSED MY MIND THAT PERHAPS WHAT SHE REALLY FEARED WAS THAT HE MIGHT COME TO HARM. FOR I COULD NOT DOUBT THAT SHE KNEW WHO THIS MAN WAS AND WHAT HE MEANT BY THESE STRANGE SIGNALS. BUT THERE IS A TONE IN MY WIFE'S VOICE, MR. HOLMES, AND A LOOK IN HER EYES WHICH FORBID DOUBT, AND I AM SURE THAT IT WAS INDEED MY OWN SAFETY THAT WAS IN HER MIND. THERE'S THE WHOLE CASE, AND NOW I WANT YOUR ADVICE AS TO WHAT I OUGHT TO DO. MY OWN INCLINATION IS TO PUT HALF-A-DOZEN OF MY FARM LADS IN THE SHRUBBERY, AND WHEN THIS FELLOW COMES AGAIN TO GIVE HIM SUCH A HIDING THAT HE WILL LEAVE US IN PEACE FOR THE FUTURE."

"I FEAR IT IS TOO DEEP A CASE FOR SUCH SIMPLE REMEDIES," SAID HOLMES. "HOW LONG CAN YOU STAY IN LONDON?"

"I MUST GO BACK TO-DAY. I WOULD NOT LEAVE MY WIFE ALONE AT NIGHT FOR ANYTHING. SHE IS VERY NERVOUS AND BEGGED ME TO COME BACK."

"I DARE SAY YOU ARE RIGHT, BUT IF YOU COULD HAVE STOPPED I MIGHT POSSIBLY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RETURN WITH YOU IN A DAY OR TWO. MEANWHILE YOU WILL LEAVE ME THESE PAPERS, AND I THINK THAT IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT I SHALL BE ABLE TO PAY YOU A VISIT SHORTLY AND TO THROW SOME LIGHT UPON YOUR CASE."

SHERLOCK HOLMES PRESERVED HIS CALM PROFESSIONAL MANNER UNTIL OUR VISITOR HAD LEFT US, ALTHOUGH IT WAS EASY FOR ME, WHO KNEW HIM SO WELL, TO SEE THAT HE WAS PROFOUNDLY EXCITED THE MOMENT THAT HILTON CUBITT'S BROAD BACK HAD DISAPPEARED THROUGH THE DOOR MY COMRADE RUSHED TO THE TABLE, LAID OUT ALL THE SLIPS OF PAPER CONTAINING DANCING MEN IN FRONT OF HIM, AND THREW HIMSELF INTO AN INTRICATE AND ELABORATE CALCULATION. FOR TWO HOURS I WATCHED HIM AS HE COVERED SHEET AFTER SHEET OF PAPER WITH FIGURES AND LETTERS, SO COMPLETELY ABSORBED IN HIS TASK THAT HE HAD EVIDENTLY FORGOTTEN MY PRESENCE. SOMETIMES HE WAS MAKING PROGRESS AND WHISTLED AND SANG AT HIS WORK; SOMETIMES HE WAS PUZZLED AND WOULD SIT FOR LONG SPELLS WITH A FURROWED BROW AND A VACANT EYE. FINALLY HE SPANG FROM HIS CHAIR WITH A CRY OF SATISFACTION, AND WALKED UP AND DOWN THE ROOM RUBBING HIS HANDS TOGETHER. THEN HE WROTE A LONG TELEGRAM UPON A CABLE FORM. "F MY ANSWER TO THIS IS AS I HOPE, YOU WILL HAVE A VERY PRETTY CASE TO ADD TO YOUR COLLECTION, WATSON," SAID HE. "I EXPECT THAT WE SHALL BE ABLE TO GO DOWN TO NORFOLK TO-MORROW, AND TO TAKE OUR FRIEND SOME VERY DEFINITE NEWS AS TO THE SECRET OF HIS ANNOYANCE."

I CONFESS THAT I WAS FILLED WITH CURIOSITY, BUT I WAS AWARE THAT HOLMES LIKED TO MAKE HIS DISCLOSURES AT HIS OWN TIME AND IN HIS OWN WAY; SO I WAITED UNTIL IT SHOULD SUIT HIM TO TAKE ME INTO HIS CONFIDENCE.

BUT THERE WAS A DELAY IN THAT ANSWERING TELEGRAM, AND TWO DAYS OF IMPATIENCE FOLLOWED, DURING WHICH HOLMES PRICKED UP HIS EARS AT EVERY RING OF THE BELL. ON THE EVENING OF THE SECOND THERE CAME A LETTER FROM HILTON CUBITT. ALL WAS QUIET WITH HIM, SAVE THAT A LONG INSCRIPTION HAD APPEARED THAT MORNING UPON THE PEDISTAL OF THE SUN-DIAL. HE ENCLOSED A COPY OF IT, WHICH IS HERE REPRODUCED:—

HOLMES BENT OVER THIS GROTESQUE FRIEZE FOR SOME MINUTES, AND THEN SUDDENLY SPANG IN HIS FEET WITH AN EXCLAMATION OF SURPRISE AND DISMAY. HIS FACE WAS HAGGARD WITH ANXIETY.

"WE HAVE LET THIS AFFAIR GO FAR ENOUGH," SAID HE. "IS THERE A TRAIN TO NORTH WALSHAM TO-NIGHT?"

I TURNED UP THE TIME-TABLE. THE LAST HAD JUST GONE.

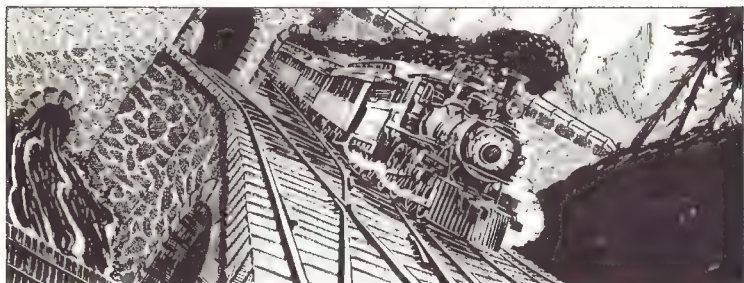
"THEN WE SHALL BREAKFAST EARLY AND TAKE THE VERY FIRST IN THE MORNING," SAID HOLMES. "OUR PRESENCE IS

MOST URGENTLY NEEDED. AH! HERE IS OUR EXPECTED CABLEGRAM. ONE MOMENT. MRS. HUDSON; THERE MAY BE AN ANSWER. NO, THAT IS QUITE AS I EXPECTED. THIS MESSAGE MAKES IT EVEN MORE ESSENTIAL THAT WE SHOULD NOT LOSE AN HOUR IN LETTING HILTON CUBITT KNOW HOW MATTERS STAND, FOR IT IS A SINGULAR AND DANGEROUS WEB IN WHICH OUR SIMPLE NORFOLK SQUIRE IS ENTANGLED."

SO, INDEED, IT PROVED, AND AS I CAME TO THE DARK CONCLUSION OF A STORY WHICH

HAD SEEMED TO ME TO BE ONLY CHILDISH AND BIZARRE I EXPERIENCE ONCE AGAIN THE DISMAY AND HORROR WITH WHICH I WAS FILLED. WOULD THAT I HAD SOME BRIGHTER ENDING TO COMMUNICATE TO MY READERS, BUT THESE ARE THE CHRONICLES OF FACT, AND I MUST FOLLOW TO THEIR DARK CRISIS THE STRANGE CHAIN OF EVENTS WHICH FOR SOME DAYS MADE RIDLING THORPE MANOR A HOUSEHOLD WORD THROUGH THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF ENGLAND





WE HAD HARDLY ALIGHTED AT NORTH WALSHAM, AND MENTIONED THE NAME OF OUR DESTINATION, WHEN THE STATION-MASTER HURRIED TOWARDS US. "I SUPPOSE THAT YOU ARE THE DETECTIVES FROM LONDON?" SAID HE.

A LOOK OF ANNOYANCE PASSED OVER HOLMES'S FACE.

"WHAT MAKES YOU THINK SUCH A THING?"



"BECAUSE INSPECTOR MARTIN FROM NORWICH HAS JUST PASSED THROUGH, BUT MAYBE YOU ARE THE SURGEONS. SHE'S NOT DEAD — WASN'T BY LAST ACCOUNTS. YOU MAY BE IN TIME TO SAVE HER YET — THOUGH IT BE FOR THE GALLOWS."

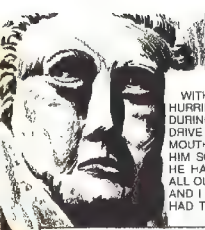
HOLMES'S BROW WAS DARK WITH ANXIETY.

"WE ARE GOING TO RIDLE NG THORPE MANOR," SAID HE, "BUT WE HAVE HEARD NOTHING OF



WHAT HAS PASSED THERE."

IT'S A TERRIBLE BUSINESS," SAID THE STATION-MASTER. "THEY ARE SHOT, BOTH MR. HLTON CUBITT AND HIS WIFE. SHE SHOT HIM AND THEN HERSELF — SO THE SERVANTS SAY. HE'S DEAD AND HER LIFE S DESPAIRED OF, DEAR, DEAR, ONE OF THE OLDEST FAMILIES IN THE COUNTY OF NORFOLK, AND ONE OF THE MOST HONOURED."



WITHOUT A WORD HOLMES HURRIED TO A CARRAGE, AND DURING THE LONG SEVEN MILES' DRIVE HE NEVER OPENED HIS MOUTH. SELDOM HAVE I SEEN HIM SO UTTERLY DESPONDENT. HE HAD BEEN UNEASY DURING ALL OUR JOURNEY FROM TOWN, AND I HAD OBSERVED THAT HE HAD TURNED OVER THE MORN-

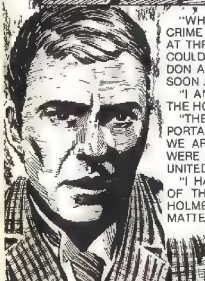
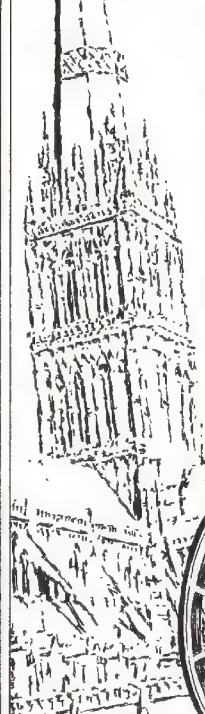
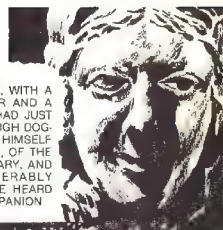
ING PAPERS WITH ANXIOUS ATTENTION; BUT NOW THIS SUDDEN REALIZATION OF HIS WORST FEARS LEFT HIM IN A BLANK MELANCHOLY. HE LEANED BACK IN HIS SEAT, LOST IN GLOOMY SPECULATION. YET THERE WAS MUCH AROUND US TO INTEREST US, FOR WE WERE PASSING

THROUGH AS SINGULAR A COUNTRYSIDE AS ANY IN ENGLAND WHERE A FEW SCATTERED COTTAGES REPRESENTED THE POPULATION OF TODAY, WHILE ON EVERY HAND ENORMOUS SQUARE-TOWERED CHURCHES BRISTLED UP FROM THE FLAT, GREEN LANDSCAPE AND TOLD

OF THE GLORY AND PROSPERITY OF OLD EAST ANGLIA. AT LAST THE VIOLET RIM OF THE GERMAN OCEAN APPEARED OVER THE GREEN EDGE OF THE NORFOLK COAST, AND THE DRIVER POINTED WITH HIS WHIP TO TWO OLD BRICK AND TIMBER GABLES WHICH PROJECTED FROM A

GROVE OF TREES. "THAT'S RIDING THORPE MANOR," SAID HE. AS WE DROVE UP TO THE PORTICOED FRONT DOOR I OBSERVED IN FRONT OF IT, BESIDE THE TENNIS LAWN THE BLACK TOOL-HOUSE AND THE PEDESTALLED SUNDIAL WITH WHICH WE HAD SUCH STRANGE ASSOCIATIONS.

A DAPPER LITTLE MAN, WITH A QUICK, ALERT MANNER AND A WAXED MOUSTACHE, HAD JUST DESCENDED FROM A HIGH DOGCART. HE INTRODUCED HIMSELF AS INSPECTOR MARTIN, OF THE NORFOLK CONSTABULARY, AND HE WAS CONSIDERABLY ASTONISHED WHEN HE HEARD THE NAME OF MY COMPANION



"WHY, MR. HOLMES, THE CRIME WAS ONLY COMMITTED AT THREE THIS MORNING. HOW COULD YOU HEAR OF IT IN LONDON AND GET TO THE SPOT AS SOON AS 12?"

"I ANTICIPATED IT. I CAME IN THE HOPE OF PREVENTING IT."

"THEN YOU MUST HAVE IMPORTANT EVIDENCE OF WHICH WE ARE IGNORANT, FOR THEY WERE SAID TO BE A MOST UNITED COUPLE."

"I HAVE ONLY THE EVIDENCE OF THE DANCING MEN," SAID HOLMES. "I WILL EXPLAIN THE MATTER TO YOU LATER MEAN-

WHILE, SINCE IT IS TOO LATE TO PREVENT THIS TRAGEDY, I AM VERY ANXIOUS THAT I SHOULD USE THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH I POSSESS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THAT JUSTICE BE DONE. WILL YOU ASSOCIATE ME IN YOUR INVESTIGATION, OR WILL YOU PREFER THAT I SHOULD ACT INDEPENDENTLY?"

"I SHOULD BE PROUD TO FEEL THAT WE WERE ACTING TOGETHER, MR. HOLMES," SAID THE INSPECTOR EARNESTLY. "IN THAT CASE, I SHOULD BE GLAD TO HEAR THE EVIDENCE

AND TO EXAMINE THE PREMISES WITHOUT AN INSTANT OF UNNECESSARY DELAY."

INSPECTOR MARTIN HAD THE GOOD SENSE TO ALLOW MY FRIEND TO DO THINGS IN HIS OWN FASHION, AND CONTENTED HIMSELF WITH CAREFULLY NOTING THE RESULTS. THE LOCAL SURGEON, AN OLD WHITE-HAIRED MAN, HAD JUST COME DOWN FROM MRS. HILTON CUBITT'S ROOM, AND HE REPORTED THAT HER INJURIES WERE SERIOUS, BUT NOT NECESSARILY FATAL. THE

BULLET HAD PASSED THROUGH THE FRONT OF HER BRAIN, AND IT WOULD PROBABLY BE SOME TIME BEFORE SHE COULD REGAIN CONSCIOUSNESS ON THE QUESTION OF WHETHER SHE HAD BEEN SHOT OR HAD SHOT HERSELF HE WOULD NOT VENTURE TO EXPRESS ANY DECIDED OPINION. CERTAINLY THE BULLET HAD BEEN DISCHARGED AT VERY CLOSE QUARTERS, THERE WAS ONLY THE ONE PISTOL FOUND IN THE ROOM, TWO BARRELS OF WHICH HAD BEEN EMPLOYED. MR. HILTON CUBITT HAD BEEN SHOT

THROUGH THE HEART. IT WAS EQUALLY CONCEIVABLE THAT HE HAD SHOT HER AND THEN HIMSELF, OR THAT SHE HAD BEEN THE CRIMINAL. FOR THE REVOLVER LAY UPON THE FLOOR MIDWAY BETWEEN THEM.

"HAS HE BEEN MOVED?" ASKED HOLMES.

"WE HAVE MOVED NOTHING EXCEPT THE LADY. WE COULD NOT LEAVE HER LYING WOUNDED UPON THE FLOOR."

"HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN HERE, DOCTOR?"

"SINCE FOUR O'CLOCK."

"ANYONE ELSE?"

"YES, THE CONSTABLE HERE."

"AND YOU HAVE TOUCHED NOTHING?"

"NOTHING."

"YOU HAVE ACTED WITH GREAT DISCRETION, WHO SENT FOR YOU?"

"THE HOUSEMAID."

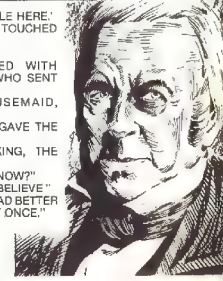
"WAS IT SHE WHO GAVE THE ALARM?"

"SHE AND MRS. KING, THE COOK."

"WHERE ARE THEY NOW?"

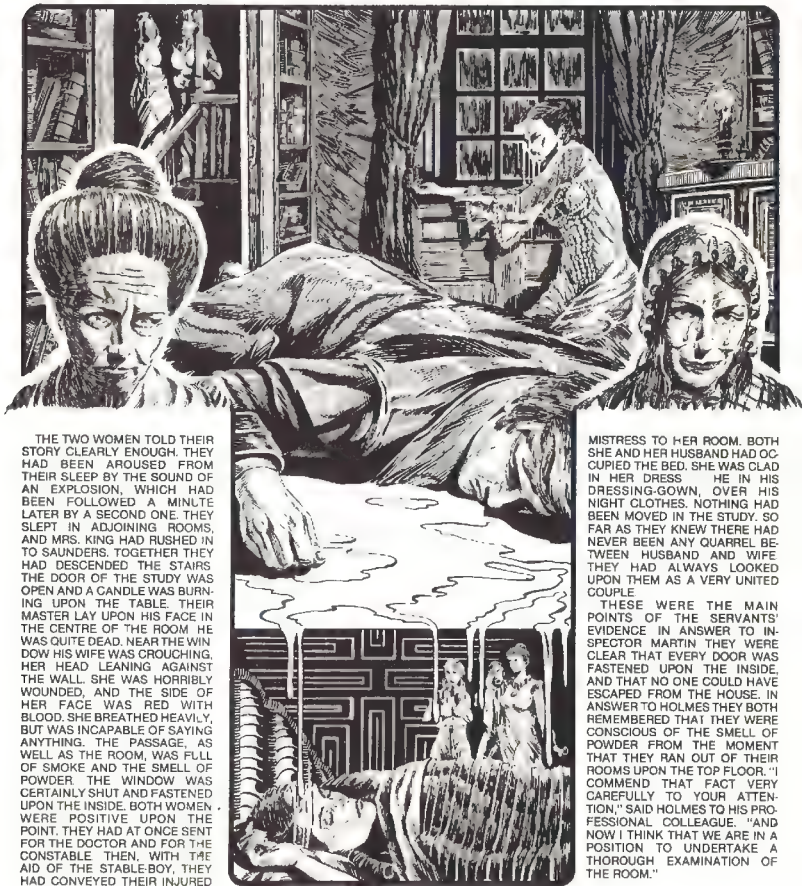
"IN THE KITCHEN, I BELIEVE."

"THEN I THINK WE HAD BETTER HEAR THEIR STORY AT ONCE."





THE OLD HALL, OAK-PANELLED AND HIGH-WINDOWED, HAD BEEN TURNED INTO A COURT OF INVESTIGATION. HOLMES SAT IN A GREAT, OLD-FASHIONED CHAIR HIS INEXORABLE EYES GLEAMING OUT OF HIS HAGGARD FACE. I COULD READ IN THEM A SET PURPOSE TO DEVOTE HIS LIFE TO THIS QUEST UNTIL THE CLIENT WHOM HE HAD FAILED TO SAVE SHOULD AT LAST BE AVENGED. THE TRIM INSPECTOR MARTIN, THE OLD, GREY-HEADED COUNTRY DOCTOR, MYSELF, AND A STOLID VILLAGE POLICEMAN MADE UP THE REST OF THAT STRANGE COMPANY.



THE TWO WOMEN TOLD THEIR STORY CLEARLY ENOUGH. THEY HAD BEEN AROUSED FROM THEIR SLEEP BY THE SOUND OF AN EXPLOSION, WHICH HAD BEEN FOLLOWED A MINUTE LATER BY A SECOND ONE. THEY SLEPT IN ADJOINING ROOMS, AND MRS. KING HAD RUSHED IN TO SAUNDERS. TOGETHER THEY HAD DESCENDED THE STAIRS. THE DOOR OF THE STUDY WAS OPEN AND A CANDLE WAS BURNING UPON THE TABLE. THEIR MASTER LAY UPON HIS FACE IN THE CENTRE OF THE ROOM. HE WAS QUITE DEAD. NEAR THE WINDOW HIS WIFE WAS CROUCHING, HER HEAD LEANING AGAINST THE WALL. SHE WAS HORRIBLY WOUNDED, AND THE SIDE OF HER FACE WAS RED WITH BLOOD. SHE BREATHED HEAVILY, BUT WAS INCAPABLE OF SAYING ANYTHING. THE PASSAGE, AS WELL AS THE ROOM, WAS FULL OF SMOKE AND THE SMELL OF POWDER. THE WINDOW WAS CERTAINLY SHUT AND FASTENED UPON THE INSIDE. BOTH WOMEN WERE POSITIVE UPON THE POINT. THEY HAD AT ONCE SENT FOR THE DOCTOR AND FOR THE CONSTABLE THEN, WITH THE AID OF THE STABLE-BOY, THEY HAD CONVEYED THEIR INJURED

MISTRESS TO HER ROOM. BOTH SHE AND HER HUSBAND HAD OCCUPIED THE BED. SHE WAS CLAD IN HER DRESS. HE IN HIS DRESSING-GOWN, OVER HIS NIGHT CLOTHES. NOTHING HAD BEEN MOVED IN THE STUDY. SO FAR AS THEY KNEW THERE HAD NEVER BEEN ANY QUARREL BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE. THEY HAD ALWAYS LOOKED UPON THEM AS A VERY UNITED COUPLE.

THESE WERE THE MAIN POINTS OF THE SERVANTS' EVIDENCE IN ANSWER TO INSPECTOR MARTIN. THEY WERE CLEAR THAT EVERY DOOR WAS FASTENED UPON THE INSIDE, AND THAT NO ONE COULD HAVE ESCAPED FROM THE HOUSE. IN ANSWER TO HOLMES THEY BOTH REMEMBERED THAT THEY WERE CONSCIOUS OF THE SMELL OF POWDER FROM THE MOMENT THAT THEY RAN OUT OF THEIR ROOMS UPON THE TOP FLOOR. "I COMMEND THAT FACT VERY CAREFULLY TO YOUR ATTENTION," SAID HOLMES TO HIS PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUE. "AND NOW I THINK THAT WE ARE IN A POSITION TO UNDERTAKE A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE ROOM."

THE STUDY PROVED TO BE A SMALL CHAMBER, LINED ON THREE SIDES WITH BOOKS, AND WITH A WRITING-TABLE FACING AN ORDINARY WINDOW, WHICH LOOKED OUT UPON THE GARDEN. OUR FIRST ATTENTION WAS GIVEN TO THE BODY OF THE UNFORTUNATE SQUIRE, WHOSE HUGE FRAME LAY STRETCHED ACROSS THE ROOM. HIS DISORDERED DRESS SHOWED THAT HE HAD BEEN HASTILY AROUSED FROM SLEEP. THE BULLET HAD BEEN FIRED AT HIM FROM THE FRONT, AND HAD REMAINED IN HIS BODY AFTER PENETRATING THE HEART. HIS DEATH HAD CERTAINLY BEEN INSTANTANEOUS AND PAINLESS. THERE WAS NO POWDER-MARKING EITHER UPON HIS DRESSING-GOWN OR ON HIS HANDS. ACCORDING TO THE COUNTRY SURGEON THE LADY HAD STAINS UPON HER FACE, BUT NONE UPON HER HAND.

"THE ABSENCE OF THE LATTER MEANS NOTHING, THOUGH ITS PRESENCE MAY MEAN EVERYTHING," SAID HOLMES. "UNLESS THE POWDER FROM A BADLY-FITTING CARTRIDGE HAPPENS TO SPURT BACKWARDS, ONE MAY FIRE MANY SHOTS WITHOUT LEAVING A SIGN. I WOULD SUGGEST THAT MR. CUBITT'S BODY MAY NOW BE REMOVED. I SUPPOSE, DOCTOR, YOU HAVE NOT RECOVERED THE BULLET WHICH WOUNDED THE LADY?"

"A SERIOUS OPERATION WILL BE NECESSARY BEFORE THAT CAN BE DONE. BUT THERE ARE STILL FOUR CARTRIDGES IN THE REVOLVER. TWO HAVE BEEN FIRED AND TWO WOUNDS INFLECTED, SO THAT EACH BULLET CAN BE ACCOUNTED FOR."

"SO IT WOULD SEEM," SAID HOLMES. "PERHAPS YOU CAN ACCOUNT ALSO FOR THE BULLET WHICH HAS SO OBVIOUSLY STRUCK THE EDGE OF THE WINDOW?"

HE HAD TURNED SUDDENLY, AND HIS LONG, THIN FINGER WAS POINTING TO A HOLE WHICH HAD BEEN DRILLED RIGHT THROUGH THE LOWER WINDOW-SASH, ABOUT AN INCH ABOVE THE BOTTOM.

"BY GEORGE!" SAID THE COUNTRY DOCTOR. "YOU ARE CERTAINLY RIGHT, SIR, THEN A THIRD SHOT HAS BEEN FIRED, AND THEREFORE A THIRD PERSON MUST HAVE BEEN PRESENT. BUT WHO COULD THAT HAVE BEEN AND HOW COULD HE HAVE GOT AWAY?"

"THAT IS THE PROBLEM WHICH WE ARE NOW ABOUT TO SOLVE," SAID SHERLOCK HOLMES. "YOU REMEMBER, INSPECTOR MARTIN, WHEN THE SERVANTS SAID THAT ON LEAVING THEIR ROOM THEY WERE AT ONCE CONSCIOUS OF A SMELL OF POWDER. I REMARKED THAT THE POINT WAS AN EXTREMELY IMPORTANT ONE?"

"YES SIR; BUT I CONFESS I DID NOT QUITE FOLLOW YOU."

"IT SUGGESTED THAT AT THE TIME OF THE FIRING THE WINDOW AS WELL AS THE DOOR OF THE ROOM HAD BEEN OPEN. OTHERWISE THE FUMES OF POWDER COULD NOT HAVE

BEEN BLOWN SO RAPIDLY THROUGH THE HOUSE A DRAUGHT IN THE ROOM WAS NECESSARY FOR THAT. BOTH DOOR AND WINDOW WERE ONLY OPEN FOR A VERY SHORT TIME. HOWEVER."

"HOW DO YOU PROVE THAT?" "BECAUSE THE CANDLE HAS NOT GUTTERED."

"CAPITAL!" CRIED THE INSPECTOR. "CAPITAL!"

"FEELING SURE THAT THE WINDOW HAD BEEN OPEN AT THE TIME OF THE TRAGEDY I CONCEIVED THAT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A THIRD PERSON IN THE AFFAIR, WHO STOOD OUTSIDE THIS OPENING AND FIRED THROUGH IT. ANY SHOT DIRECTED AT THIS PERSON MIGHT HIT THE SASH. I LOOKED THERE, SURE ENOUGH, WAS THE BULLET MARK!"

"THE WOMAN'S FIRST INSTINCT WOULD BE TO SHUT AND FASTEN THE WINDOW. BUT, HALLOA! WHAT IS THIS?"

IT WAS A LADY'S HAND-BAG WHICH STOOD UPON THE STUDY TABLE — A TRIM LITTLE HAND-BAG OF CROCODILE SKIN AND SILVER. HOLMES OPENED IT AND TURNED THE CONTENTS OUT THERE WERE TWENTY FIFTY-POUND NOTES OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND, HELD TOGETHER BY AN INDIA-RUBBER BAND — NOTHING ELSE.

"THIS MUST BE PRESERVED,

FOR IT WILL FIGURE IN THE TRIAL," SAID HOLMES, AS HE HANDED THE BAG WITH ITS CONTENTS TO THE INSPECTOR. "IT IS NOW NECESSARY THAT WE SHOULD TRY TO THROW SOME LIGHT UPON THE THIRD BULLET, WHICH HAS CLEARLY, FROM THE SPLINTERING OF THE WOOD, BEEN FIRED FROM INSIDE THE ROOM. I SHOULD LIKE TO SEE MRS KING, THE COOK, AGAIN. YOU SAID, MRS KING, THAT YOU WERE AWAKENED BY A LOUD EXPLOSION WHEN YOU SAID THAT, DID YOU MEAN THAT IT SEEMED TO YOU TO BE LOUDER THAN THE SECOND ONE?"

"WELL, SIR, IT WAKENED ME FROM MY SLEEP, AND SO IT IS HARD TO JUDGE. BUT IT DID SEEM VERY LOUD."

"YOU DON'T THINK THAT IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN TWO SHOTS FIRED ALMOST AT THE SAME INSTANT?"

"I AM SURE I COULDN'T SAY, SIR."

"I BELIEVE THAT IT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY SO. I RATHER THINK, INSPECTOR MARTIN, THAT WE HAVE NOW EXHAUSTED ALL THAT THIS ROOM CAN TEACH US. IF YOU WILL KINDLY STEP ROUND WITH ME, WE SHALL SEE WHAT FRESH EVIDENCE THE GARDEN HAS TO OFFER."



A FLOWER-BED EXTENDED UP TO THE STUDY WINDOW, AND WE ALL BROKE INTO AN EXCLAMATION AS WE APPROACHED IT. THE FLOWERS WERE TRAMPLED DOWN, AND THE SOFT SOIL WAS IMPRINTED ALL OVER WITH FOOTMARKS. LARGE, MASCULINE FEET THEY WERE,

WITH PECULIARLY LONG, SHARP TOES. HOLMES HUNTED ABOUT AMONG THE GRASS AND LEAVES LIKE A RETRIEVER AFTER A WOUNDED BIRD. THEN, WITH A CRY OF SATISFACTION, HE BENT FORWARD AND PICKED UP A LITTLE BRAZEN CYLINDER.



"I THOUGHT SO," SAID HE; "THE REVOLVER HAD AN EJEC TOR, AND HERE IS THE THIRD CARTRIDGE. I REALLY THINK, INSPECTOR MARTIN, THAT OUR CASE IS ALMOST COMP. ETC."

THE COUNTRY INSPECTOR'S FACE HAD SHOWN HIS INTENSE AMAZEMENT AT THE RAPID AND MASTERFUL PROGRESS OF HOLMES'S INVESTIGATION. AT FIRST HE HAD SHOWN SOME DISPOSITION TO ASSERT HIS OWN POSITION, BUT NOW HE WAS OVERCOME WITH ADMIRA TION AND READY TO FOLLOW WITHOUT QUESTION WHEREVER HOLMES LED.

"WHOM DO YOU SUSPECT?" HE ASKED.

"I'LL GO INTO THAT LATER. THERE ARE SEVERAL POINTS IN THIS PROBLEM WHICH I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO EXPLAIN TO YOU YET. NOW THAT I HAVE GOT SO FAR I HAD BEST PROCEED ON MY OWN LINES, AND THEN CLEAR THE WHOLE MATTER UP ONCE AND FOR ALL."

"JUST AS YOU WISH, MR. HOLMES, SO LONG AS WE GET OUR MAN."

"I HAVE NO DESIRE TO MAKE MYSTERIES, BUT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THE MOMENT OF ACTION TO ENTER INTO LONG AND COMPLEX EXPLANATIONS. I HAVE THE THREADS OF THIS AFFAIR ALL IN MY HAND. EVEN IF THIS LADY SHOULD NEVER RECOVER CONSCIOUSNESS WE CAN STILL RECONSTRUCT THE EVENTS OF LAST NIGHT AND ENSURE THAT JUSTICE BE DONE. FIRST OF ALL I WISH TO KNOW WHETHER THERE IS ANY INN IN THIS NEIGHBOURHOOD KNOWN AS ELRIGE'S?"

THE SERVANTS WERE CROSS-QUESTIONED, BUT NONE OF THEM HAD HEARD OF SUCH A PLACE. THE STABLE-BOY THREW A LIGHT UPON THE MATTER BY REMEMBERING THAT A FARMER OF THAT NAME LIVED SOME MILES OFF IN THE DIRECTION OF EAST RUSTON.

"IS IT A LONELY FARM?"

"VERY LONELY, SIR."

"PERHAPS THEY HAVE NOT HEARD YET OF ALL THAT HAP PENED HERE DURING THE NIGHT?"

"MAYBE NOT, SIR."

HOLMES THOUGHT FOR A LIT TLE AND THEN A CURIOUS SMILE PLAYED OVER HIS FACE.

"SADDLE A HORSE, MY LAD," SAID HE. "I SHALL WISH YOU TO TAKE A NOTE TO ELRIGE'S FARM."

HE TOOK FROM HIS POCKET THE VARIOUS SLIPS OF THE DAN CING MEN. WITH THESE IN FRONT OF HIM HE WORKED FOR SOME TIME AT THE STUDY-TABLE. FINALLY HE HANDED A NOTE TO THE BOY, WITH DIRECT ONS TO PUT IT INTO THE HANDS OF THE PERSON TO WHOM IT WAS AD DRESSED, AND ESPECIALLY TO ANSWER NO QUEST ONS OF ANY SORT WHICH MIGHT BE PUT TO HIM. I SAW THE OUTSIDE OF THE NOTE, ADDRESSED IN STRAGGL ING, IRREGULAR, CHARACTERS, VERY UNLIKE HOLMES'S USUAL PRICISE HAND. IT WAS CONG NED TO MR. ABE SLANEY, ELRIGE'S FARM, EAST RUSTON, NORFOLK

"I THINK, INSPECTOR," HOLMES REMARKED, "THAT YOU WOULD DO WELL TO TELEGRAPH FOR AN ESCORT. AS, IF MY CALCULATIONS PROVE TO BE CORRECT, YOU MAY HAVE A PAR TICULARLY DANGEROUS PRISONER TO CONVEY TO THE COUNTY GAOL. THE BOY WHO TAKES THIS NOTE COULD NO DOUBT FORWARD YOUR

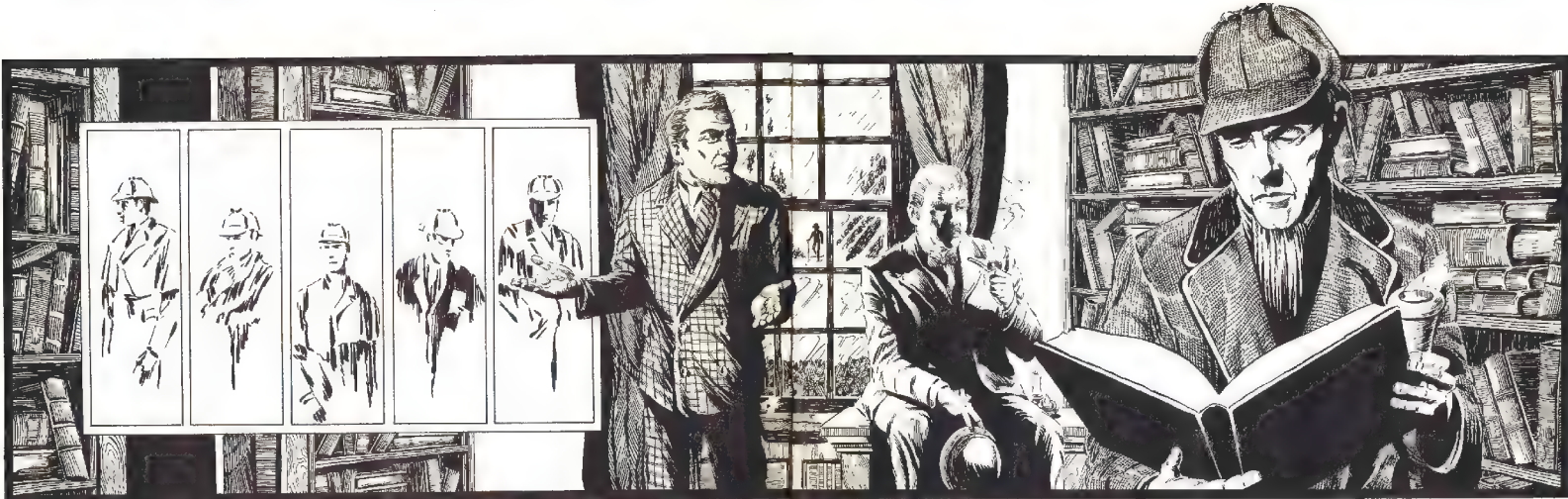
TELEGRAM IF THERE IS AN AFTERNOON TRAIN TO TOWN. WATSON, I THINK WE SHOULD DO WELL TO TAKE IT, AS I HAVE A CHEMICAL ANALYSIS OF SOME INTEREST TO FINISH, AND THIS INVESTIGATION DRAWS RAPIDLY TO A CLOSE."

WHEN THE YOUTH HAD BEEN DISPATCHED WITH THE NOTE, SHERLOCK HOLMES GAVE HIS



INSTRUCTIONS TO THE SER VANTS. IF ANY VISITOR WERE TO CALL ASKING FOR MRS. HILTON CUBITT NO INFORMATION SHOULD BE GIVEN AS TO HER CONDITION, BUT HE WAS TO BE SHOWN AT ONCE INTO THE DRAWING-ROOM. HE IMPRESSED THESE POINTS UPON THEM WITH THE UTMOST EARNESTNESS. FINALLY HE LED THE WAY INTO

THE DRAWING-ROOM WITH THE REMARK THAT THE BUSINESS WAS NOW OUT OF OUR HANDS, AND THAT WE MUST WHILE AWAY THE TIME AS BEST WE MIGHT UNTIL WE COULD SEE WHAT WAS IN STORE FOR US. THE DOCTOR HAD DEPARTED TO HIS PATIENTS, AND ONLY THE INSPECTOR AND MYSELF REMAIN ED



"I THINK THAT I CAN HELP TO PASS AN HOUR IN AN INTERESTING AND PROFITABLE MANNER," SAID HOLMES, DRAWING HIS CHAIR UP TO THE VARIOUS PAPERS UPON WHICH WERE RECORDED THE ANTICS OF THE DANCING MEN. 'AS TO YOU, FRIEND WATSON, I OWE YOU EVER ATONEMENT FOR HAVING ALLOWED YOUR NATURAL CURIOSITY TO REMAIN SO LONG UNSATISFIED. TO YOU INSPECTOR, THE WHOLE INCIDENT MAY APPEAL AS A REMARKABLE PROFESSIONAL STUDY. I MUST TELL YOU FIRST OF ALL THE INTERESTING CIRCUMSTANCES CONNECTED WITH THE PREVIOUS CONSULTATIONS WHICH MR. HILTON CUBITT HAD HAD WITH ME IN BAKER STREET.' HE THEN SHORTLY RECAPITULATED THE FACTS WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN RECORDED. 'I HAVE HERE IN FRONT OF ME THESE SINGULAR PRODUCTIONS, AT WHICH ONE MIGHT SMILE, HAD THEY NOT PROVED THEMSELVES TO BE THE FORERUNNERS OF SO TERRIBLE A TRAGEDY. I AM FAIRLY FAMILIAR WITH ALL FORMS OF SECRET WRITINGS, AND AM MYSELF THE AUTHOR OF A TRIFLING MONOGRAPH UPON THE SUBJECT, IN WHICH I ANALYZE ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY SEPARATE CIPHERS; BUT I CONFESS THAT THIS IS ENTIRELY NEW TO ME. THE OBJECT OF THOSE WHO INVENTED THE SYSTEM HAS APPARENTLY BEEN TO CONCEAL THAT THESE CHARACTERS CONVEY A MESSAGE, AND TO GIVE THE IDEA THAT THEY ARE THE MERE RANDOM SKETCHES OF CHILDREN.

"HAVING ONCE RECOGNIZED, HOWEVER, THAT THE SYMBOLS STOOD FOR LETTERS, AND HAVING APPLIED THE RULES WHICH



GUIDE US IN ALL FORMS OF SECRET WRITINGS, THE SOLUTION WAS EASY ENOUGH. THE FIRST MESSAGE SUBMITTED TO ME WAS SO SHORT THAT IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME TO DO MORE THAN TO SAY WITH SOME CONFIDENCE THAT THE SYMBOL STOOD FOR E. AS YOU ARE AWARE, E IS THE MOST COMMON LETTER IN THE ENGLISH ALPHABET, AND IT PREDOMINATES TO SO MARKED AN EXTENT THAT EVEN IN A SHORT SENTENCE ONE WOULD EXPECT TO FIND IT MOST OFTEN. OUT OF FIFTEEN SYMBOLS IN THE FIRST MESSAGE FOUR WERE THE SAME, SO IT WAS REASONABLE TO SET THIS DOWN AS E. IT IS TRUE THAT IN SOME CASES THE FIGURE WAS BEARING A FLAG AND IN SOME CASES NOT, BUT IT WAS PROBABLE FROM THE WAY IN WHICH THE FLAGS WERE DISTRIBUTED THAT THEY WERE USED TO BREAK THE SENTENCE UP INTO WORDS. I ACCEPTED THIS AS A HYPOTHESIS, AND NOTED THAT E WAS REPRESENTED BY



"BUT NOW CAME THE REAL DIFFICULTY OF THE INQUIRY: THE ORDER OF THE ENGLISH LETTERS AFTER E IS BY NO MEANS WELL MARKED, AND ANY PREPONDERANCE WHICH MAY BE SHOWN IN AN AVERAGE OF A PRINTED SHEET MAY BE REVERSED IN A SINGLE SHORT

SENTENCE. SPEAKING ROUGHLY, T, A, O, I, N, S, H, R, D, AND L ARE THE NUMERICAL ORDER IN WHICH LETTERS OCCUR, BUT T, A, O, AND I ARE VERY NEARLY AVERAGE OF EACH OTHER, AND IT WOULD BE AN ENDLESS TASK TO TRY EACH COMBINATION UNTIL A MEANING WAS ARRIVED AT. I, THEREFORE, WAITED FOR FRESH MATERIAL IN MY SECOND INTERVIEW WITH MR. HILTON CUBITT. HE WAS ABLE TO GIVE ME TWO OTHER SHORT SENTENCES AND ONE MESSAGE, WHICH APPEARED — SINCE THERE WAS NO FLAG — TO BE A SINGLE WORD. HERE ARE THE SYMBOLS. NOW, IN THE SINGLE WORD I HAVE ALREADY GOT THE TWO E'S COMING SECOND AND FOURTH IN A WORD OF FIVE LETTERS. IT MIGHT BE 'SEVER,' OR 'LEVER,' OR 'NEVER.' THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION THAT THE LATTER AS A REPLY TO AN APPEAL IS FAR THE MOST PROBABLE, AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES POINTED TO ITS BEING A REPLY WRITTEN BY THE LADY, ACCEPTING IT AS CORRECT, WE ARE NOW ABLE TO SAY THAT THE SYMBOLS



STAND RESPECTIVELY FOR N, V AND R. "EVEN NOW I WAS IN CONSIDERABLE DIFFICULTY, BUT A HAPPY THOUGHT PUT ME IN POSSESSION OF SEVERAL OTHER LETTERS. IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT IF THESE APPEALS CAME, AS I EXPECTED FROM SOMEONE WHO HAD BEEN INTIMATE WITH THE LADY IN HER EARLY LIFE, A COMBINATION WHICH CONTAINED TWO E'S AND THREE LETTERS BETWEEN THEM MIGHT VERY STAND FOR THE



NAME 'ELSIE.' ON EXAMINATION I FOUND THAT SUCH A COMBINATION FORMED THE TERMINATION OF THE MESSAGE WHICH WAS THREE TIMES REPEATED. IT WAS CERTAINLY SOME APPEAL TO 'ELSIE.' IN THIS WAY I HAD GOT MY L, S, AND I, BUT WHAT APPEAL COULD IT BE? THERE WERE ONLY FOUR LETTERS IN THE WORD WHICH PROCEEDED 'ELSIE,' AND IT ENDED IN E. SURELY THE WORD MUST BE 'COME.' I TRIED ALL OTHER FOUR LETTERS ENDING IN E, BUT COULD FIND NONE TO FIT THE CASE. SO NOW I WAS IN POSSESSION OF C, O, AND M, AND I WAS IN A POSITION TO ATTACK THE FIRST MESSAGE ONCE MORE, DIVIDING IT INTO WORDS, AND PUTTING DOTS FOR EACH SYMBOL WHICH WAS STILL UNKNOWN. SO TREATED IT WORKED OUT IN THIS FASHION:—

M. E. R. E. S. L. N. E. "NOW THE FIRST LETTER CAN ONLY BE A, WHICH IS A MOST USEFUL DISCOVERY, SINCE IT OCCURS NO FEWER THAN THREE TIMES IN THIS SHORT SENTENCE, AND THE H IS ALSO APPARENT IN THE SECOND WORD. NOW IT BECOMES:—

AM HERE A E. S. L. N. E. OR, FILLING IN THE OBVIOUS VACANCIES IN THE NAME:—

AM HERE ABE SLANEY. I HAD SO MANY LETTERS NOW THAT I COULD PROCEED WITH CONSIDERABLE CONFIDENCE TO THE SECOND MESSAGE, WHICH WORKED OUT IN THIS FASHION:—

A. E. L. R. I. S. HERE I COULD ONLY MAKE SENSE BY PUTTING T AND G FOR THE MISSING LETTERS, AND SUPPOSING THAT THE NAME WAS THAT OF SOME HOUSE OR INN AT WHICH THE WRITER WAS STAYING.

INSPECTOR MARTYN AND I HAD LISTENED WITH THE UTMOST INTEREST TO THE FULL AND CLEAR ACCOUNT OF HOW MY FRIEND HAD PRODUCED RESULTS WHICH HAD LED TO SO COMPLETE A COMMAND OVER OUR DIFFICULTIES.

"WHAT DID YOU DO THEN, SIR?" ASKED THE INSPECTOR. "I HAD EVERY REASON TO SUPPOSE THAT THIS ABE SLANEY WAS AN AMERICAN, SINCE ABE IS AN AMERICAN CONTRACTION, AND SINCE A LETTER FROM AMERICA HAD BEEN THE STARTING-POINT OF ALL THE TROUBLE. I HAD ALSO EVERY CAUSE TO THINK THAT THERE WAS SOME CRIMINAL SECRET IN THE MATTER. THE LADY'S ALLUSIONS TO HER PAST AND HER REFUSAL TO TAKE HER HUSBAND INTO HER CONFIDENCE BOTH POINTED IN THAT DIRECTION. I THEREFORE CABLED TO MY FRIEND, WILSON HARGREAVE, OF THE NEW YORK POLICE BUREAU, WHO HAS MORE THAN ONCE MADE USE OF MY KNOWLEDGE OF LONDON CRIME. I ASKED HIM WHETHER THE NAME OF ABE SLANEY WAS KNOWN TO HIM. HERE IS HIS REPLY: 'THE MOST DANGEROUS CROOK IN CHICAGO.' ON THE VERY EVENING UPON WHICH I HAD HIS ANSWER, HILTON CUBITT SENT ME THE LAST MESSAGE FROM SLANEY, WORKING WITH KNOWN LETTERS IT TOOK THIS FORM:—

ELSIE. 'REARE TO MEET THY GO. THE ADDITION OF A P AND A D COMPLETED A MESSAGE WHICH SHOWED ME THAT THE RASCAL WAS PROCEEDING FROM PERSUASION TO THREATS, AND MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE CROOKS OF CHICAGO PREPARED ME TO FIND THAT HE MIGHT VERY

RAPIDLY PUT HIS WORDS INTO ACTION. I AT ONCE CAME TO NOBLY WITH MY FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE, DR. WATSON, BUT UNHAPPILY, ONLY IN TIME TO FIND THAT THE WORST HAD ALREADY OCCURRED."

"IT IS A PRIVILEGE TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH YOU IN THE HANDLING OF A CASE," SAID THE INSPECTOR, WARMLY. "YOU WILL EXCUSE ME, HOWEVER, IF I SPEAK FRANKLY TO YOU. YOU ARE ONLY ANSWERABLE TO YOURSELF, BUT I HAVE TO ANSWER TO MY SUPERIORS IF THIS ABE SLANEY, LIVING AT ELRIDGE'S, IS, IN DEED, THE MURDERER, AND IF HE HAS MADE HIS ESCAPE WHILE I AM SEATED HERE, I SHOULD CERTAINLY GET INTO SERIOUS TROUBLE."

"YOU NEED NOT BE UNEASY. HE WILL NOT TRY TO ESCAPE."

"HOW DO YOU KNOW?"

"TO FLY WOULD BE A CONFESSION OF GUILT."

"THEN LET US GO TO ARREST HIM."

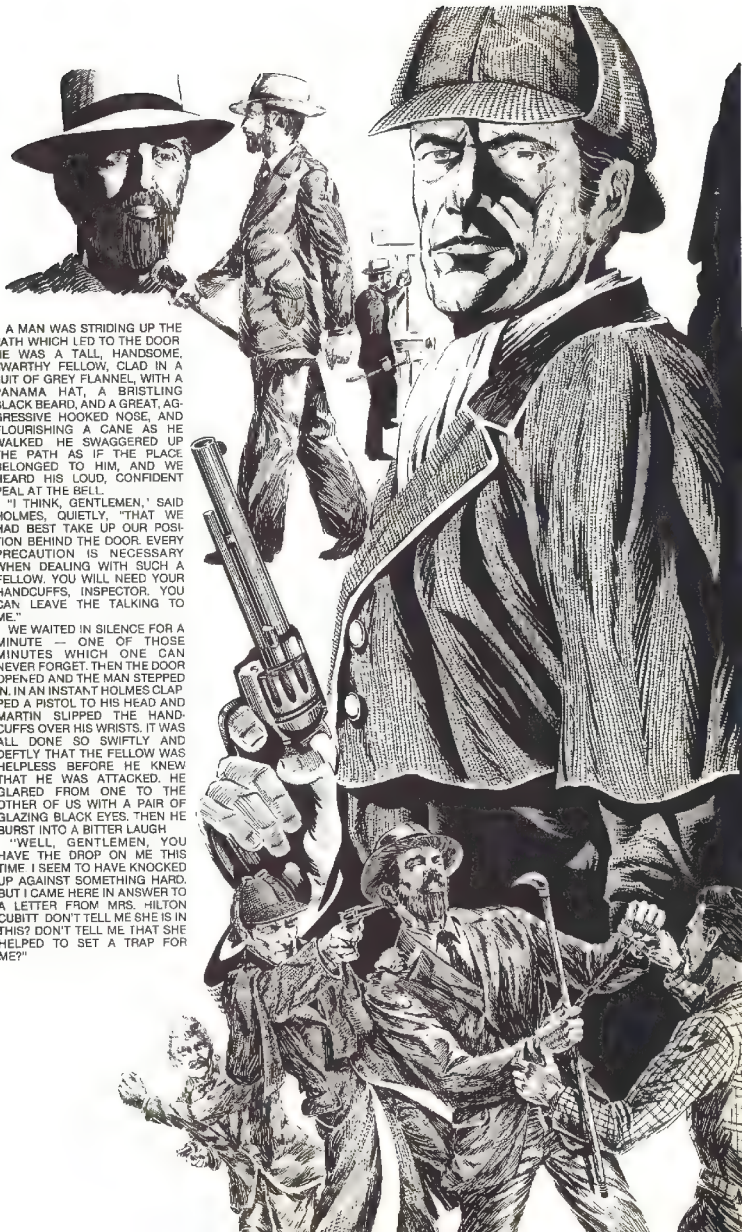
"I EXPECT HIM HERE EVERY INSTANT."

"BUT WHY SHOULD HE COME?"

"BECAUSE I HAVE WRITTEN AND ASKED HIM."

"BUT THIS IS INCREDIBLE, MR. HOLMES! WHY SHOULD HE COME BECAUSE YOU HAVE ASKED HIM? WOULD NOT SUCH A REQUEST RATHER ROUSE HIS SUSPICIONS AND CAUSE HIM TO FLY?"

"I THINK I HAVE KNOWN HOW TO TRICK THE LETTERS," SAID SHERLOCK HOLMES. "IN FACT, IF I AM NOT VERY MUCH MISTAKEN, HERE IS THE GENTLEMAN HIMSELF COMING UP THE DRIVE."



A MAN WAS STRIDING UP THE PATH WHICH LED TO THE DOOR. HE WAS A TALL, HANDSOME, SWARTHY FELLOW, CLAD IN A SUIT OF GREY FLANNEL, WITH A PANAMA HAT, A BRISTLING BLACK BEARD, AND A GREAT, AGGRESSIVE HOOKED NOSE, AND FLOURISHING A CANE AS HE WALKED. HE SWAGGERED UP THE PATH AS IF THE PLACE BELONGED TO HIM, AND WE HEARD HIS LOUD, CONFIDENT PEAL AT THE BELL.

"I THINK, GENTLEMEN," SAID HOLMES, QUIETLY, "THAT WE HAD BEST TAKE UP OUR POSITION BEHIND THE DOOR. EVERY PRECAUTION IS NECESSARY WHEN DEALING WITH SUCH A FELLOW. YOU WILL NEED YOUR HANDCUFFS, INSPECTOR. YOU CAN LEAVE THE TALKING TO ME."

WE WAITED IN SILENCE FOR A MINUTE — ONE OF THOSE MINUTES WHICH ONE CAN NEVER FORGET. THEN THE DOOR OPENED AND THE MAN STEPPED IN. IN AN INSTANT HOLMES CLAPPED A PISTOL TO HIS HEAD AND MARTIN SLIPPED THE HANDCUFFS OVER HIS WRISTS. IT WAS ALL DONE SO SWIFTLY AND DEFTLY THAT THE FELLOW WAS HELPLESS BEFORE HE KNEW THAT HE WAS ATTACKED. HE GLARED FROM ONE TO THE OTHER OF US WITH A PAIR OF GLAZING BLACK EYES. THEN HE BURST INTO A BITTER LAUGH.

"WELL, GENTLEMEN, YOU HAVE THE DROP ON ME THIS TIME. I SEEM TO HAVE KNOCKED UP AGAINST SOMETHING HARD. BUT I CAME HERE IN ANSWER TO A LETTER FROM MRS. HILTON CUBITT. DON'T TELL ME SHE IS THIS? DON'T TELL ME THAT SHE HELPED TO SET A TRAP FOR ME?"

"MRS. HILTON CUBITT WAS SERIOUSLY INJURED AND IS AT DEATH'S DOOR."

THE MAN GAVE A HOARSE CRY OF GRIEF WHICH RANG THROUGH THE HOUSE.

"YOU'RE CRAZY!" HE CRIED, FIERCELY. "IT WAS HE THAT WAS HURT, NOT SHE. WHO WOULD HAVE HURT LITTLE ELSIE? MAY HAVE THREATENED HER, GOD FORGIVE ME, BUT I WOULD NOT HAVE TOUCHED A HAIR OF HER PRETTY HEAD. TAKE IT BACK — YOU! SAY THAT SHE IS NOT HURT!"

"SHE WAS FOUND BADLY WOUNDED BY THE SIDE OF HER DEAD HUSBAND."

HE SANK WITH A DEEP GROAN ON TO THE SETTEE AND BURIED HIS FACE IN HIS MANACLED HANDS. FOR FIVE MINUTES HE WAS SILENT. THEN HE RAISED HIS FACE ONCE MORE, AND SPOKE WITH THE COLD COMPOSURE OF DESPAIR.

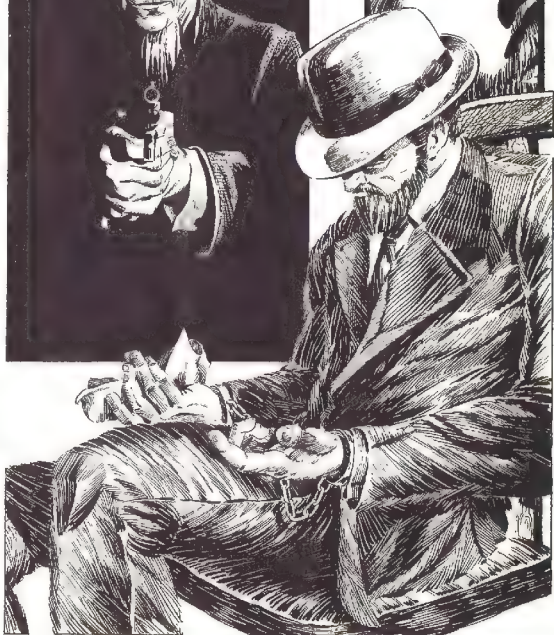
"I HAVE NOTHING TO HIDE FROM YOU, GENTLEMEN," SAID HE. "IF I SHOT THE MAN HE HAD HIS SHOT AT ME, AND THERE'S NO MURDER IN THAT. BUT IF YOU THINK I COULD HAVE HURT THAT WOMAN, THEN YOU DON'T KNOW EITHER ME OR HER. I TELL YOU THERE WAS NEVER A MAN IN THIS WORLD LOVED A WOMAN MORE THAN I LOVED HER. I HAD A RIGHT TO HER. SHE WAS PLEDGED TO ME YEARS AGO, WHO WAS THIS ENGLISHMAN THAT HE SHOULD COME BETWEEN US? IF I TELL YOU THAT I HAD THE FIRST RIGHT TO HER, AND THAT I WAS ONLY CLAIMING MY OWN."

"SHE BROKE AWAY FROM YOUR INFLUENCE WHEN SHE FOUND THE MAN THAT YOU ARE," SAID HOLMES, STERNLY. "SHE FLED FROM AMERICA TO AVOID YOU, AND SHE MARRIED AN HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN IN ENGLAND. YOU DOGGED HER AND FOLLOWED HER AND MADE HER LIFE A MISERY TO HER IN ORDER TO INDUCE HER TO ABANDON THE HUSBAND WHOM SHE LOVED AND RESPECTED IN ORDER TO FLY WITH YOU, WHOM SHE FEARED AND HATED. YOU HAVE ENDED BY BRINGING ABOUT THE DEATH OF A NOBLE MAN AND DRIVING HIS WIFE TO SUICIDE. THAT IS YOUR RECORD IN THIS BUSINESS, MR. ABE SLANEY, AND YOU WILL ANSWER FOR IT TO THE LAW."

"IF ELSIE DIES I CARE NOTHING WHAT BECOMES OF ME," SAID THE AMERICAN. HE OPENED ONE OF HIS HANDS AND LOOKED AT A NOTE CRUMPLED UP IN HIS PALM. "SEE HERE, MISTER," HE CRIED WITH A GLEAM OF SUSPICION IN HIS EYES. "YOU'RE NOT TRYING TO SCARE ME OVER THIS ARE YOU? IF THE LADY IS HURT AS BAD AS YOU SAY, WHO WAS IT THAT WROTE THIS NOTE?" HE TOSSED IT FORWARDS ON TO THE TABLE.

"I WROTE IT TO BRING YOU HERE."

"YOU WROTE IT? THERE WAS NO ONE ON EARTH OUTSIDE THE JOINT WHO KNEW THE SECRET OF THE DANCING MEN HOW CAME YOU TO WRITE IT?"



"WHAT ONE MAN CAN INVENT ANOTHER CAN DISCOVER," SAID HOLMES. "THERE IS A CAB COMING TO CONVEY YOU TO NORWICH, MR. SLANEY. BUT, MEANWHILE YOU HAVE TIME TO MAKE SOME SMALL REPARATION FOR THE INJURY YOU HAVE WROUGHT ARE YOU AWARE THAT MRS. HILTON CUBITT HAS HERSELF LAIN UNDER GRAVE SUSPICION OF THE MURDER OF HER HUSBAND, AND THAT IT WAS ONLY MY PRESENCE HERE AND THE KNOWLEDGE WHICH I HAPPENED TO POSSESS WHICH HAS SAVED HER FROM THE ACCUSATION? THE LEAST THAT YOU OWE HER IS TO MAKE IT CLEAR TO THE WHOLE WORLD THAT SHE WAS IN NO WAY, DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY, RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS TRAGIC END."



"I ASK NOTHING BETTER," SAID THE AMERICAN. "I GUESS THE VERY BEST CASE I CAN MAKE FOR MYSELF IS THE ABSOLUTE NAKED TRUTH."



"IT IS MY DUTY TO WARN YOU THAT IT WILL BE USED AGAINST YOU," CRIED THE INSPECTOR, WITH THE MAGNIFICENT FAIRPLAY OF THE BRITISH CRIMINAL LAW.



SLANEY SHRUGGED HIS SHOULDERS.





"I'LL CHANCE THAT," SAID HE "FIRST OF ALL, I WANT YOU GENTLEMEN TO UNDERSTAND THAT I HAVE KNOWN THIS LADY SINCE SHE WAS A CHILD. THERE WERE SEVEN OF US IN A GANG IN CHICAGO, AND ELSIE'S FATHER WAS THE BOSS OF THE JOINT HE WAS A CLEVER MAN, WAS OLD PATRICK. IT WAS HE WHO INVENTED THAT WRITING, WHICH WOULD PASS AS A CHILD'S

SCRAWL UNLESS YOU JUST HAP- PENED TO HAVE THE KEY TO IT WELL, ELSIE LEARNED SOME OF OUR WAYS; BUT SHE COULDN'T STAND THE BUSINESS, AND SHE HAD A BIT OF HONEST MONEY OF HER OWN, SO SHE GAVE US ALL THE SLIP AND GOT AWAY TO LONDON. SHE HAD BEEN ENGAGED TO ME AND SHE WOULD HAVE MARRIED ME, I BELIEVE, IF I HAD TAKEN OVER ANOTHER

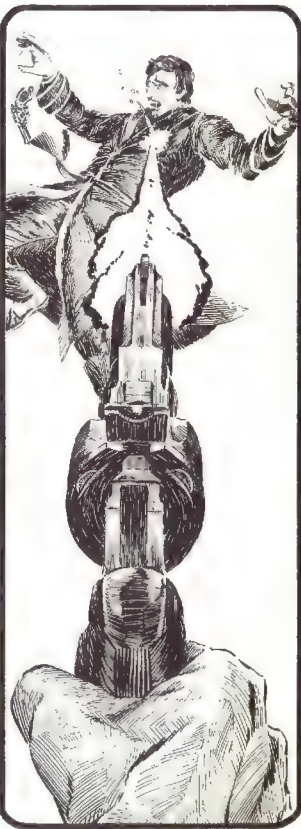
PROFESSION, BUT SHE WOULD HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH ANYTHING ON THE CROSS. IT WAS ONLY AFTER HER MARRIAGE TO THIS ENGLISHMAN THAT I WAS ABLE TO FIND OUT WHERE SHE WAS. WROTE TO HER, BUT GOT NO ANSWER AFTER THAT I CAME OVER, AND, AS LETTERS WERE NO USE, I PUT MY MESSAGES WHERE SHE COULD READ THEM



"WELL, I HAVE BEEN HERE A MONTH NOW. I LIVED IN THAT FARM, WHERE I HAD A ROOM DOWN BELOW, AND COULD GET IN AND OUT EVERY NIGHT, AND NO ONE THE WISER. I TRIED ALL I COULD TO COAX ELSIE AWAY. I KNEW THAT SHE READ THE MESSAGES, FOR ONCE SHE WROTE AN ANSWER UNDER ONE OF THEM. THEN MY TEMPER GOT THE BETTER OF ME, AND I BEGAN TO THREATEN HER. SHE SENT ME A LETTER THEN, IMPLORING ME

TO GO AWAY AND SAYING THAT IT WOULD BREAK HER HEART IF ANY SCANDAL SHOULD COME UPON HER HUSBAND. SHE SAID THAT SHE WOULD COME DOWN WHEN HER HUSBAND WAS ASLEEP AT THREE IN THE MORNING, AND SPEAK WITH ME THROUGH THE END WINDOW, IF I WOULD GO AWAY AFTERWARDS AND LEAVE HER IN PEACE. SHE CAME DOWN AND BROUGHT MONEY WITH HER, TRYING TO BRIBE ME TO GO. THIS MADE ME

MAD, AND I CAUGHT HER ARM AND TRIED TO PULL HER THROUGH THE WINDOW AT THAT MOMENT IN RUSHED THE HUSBAND WITH HIS REVOLVER IN HIS HAND. ELSIE HAD SUNK DOWN UPON THE FLOOR, AND WE WERE FACE TO FACE. I WAS HEELED ALSO, AND I HELD UP MY GUN TO SCARE HIM OFF AND LET ME GET AWAY. HE FIRED AND MISSED ME. I PULLED OFF ALMOST AT THE SAME INSTANT,



AND DOWN HE DROPPED. I MADE AWAY ACROSS THE GARDEN, AND AS I WENT I HEARD THE WINDOW SHUT BEHIND ME. THAT'S GOD'S TRUTH, GENTLEMEN, EVERY WORD OF IT, AND I HEARD NO MORE ABOUT IT UNTIL THAT LAD CAME RIDING UP WITH A NOTE WHICH MADE ME WALK IN HERE, LIKE A JAY, AND GIVE MYSELF INTO YOUR HANDS."



A CAB HAD DRIVEN UP WHILST THE AMERICAN HAD BEEN TALKING. TWO UNIFORMED POLICEMEN SAT INSIDE. INSPECTOR MARTIN ROSE AND TOUCHED HIS PRISONER ON THE SHOULDER.

"IT IS TIME FOR US TO GO."

"CAN I SEE HER FIRST?"

"NO, SHE IS NOT CONSCIOUS MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES, I ONLY HOPE THAT IF EVER AGAIN I HAVE AN IMPORTANT CASE I SHALL HAVE THE GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE YOU BY MY SIDE."

WE STOOD AT THE WINDOW AND WATCHED THE CAB DRIVE AWAY. AS I TURNED BACK MY EYE CAUGHT THE PELLET OF PAPER WHICH THE PRISONER HAD TOSSED UPON THE TABLE. IT WAS THE NOTE WITH WHICH HOLMES HAD DECEIVED HIM.

"SEE IF YOU CAN READ IT, WATSON," SAID HE, WITH A SMILE.

IT CONTAINED NO WORD, BUT THIS LITTLE LINE OF DANCING MEN:—



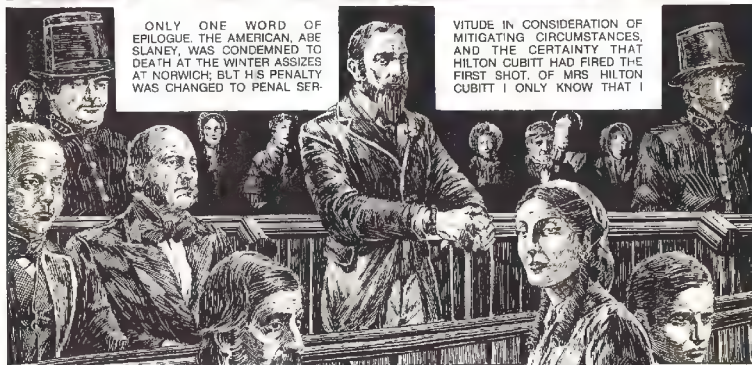
"IF YOU USE THE CODE WHICH I HAVE EXPLAINED," SAID HOLMES, "YOU WILL FIND THAT IT SIMPLY MEANS 'COME HERE AT ONCE.' I WAS CONVINCED THAT IT WAS AN INVITATION WHICH HE WOULD NOT REFUSE, SINCE HE COULD NEVER IMAGINE THAT IT WOULD COME FROM ANYONE BUT THE LADY. AND SO, MY DEAR WATSON, WE HAVE ENDED BY TURNING THE DANCING MEN TO GOOD WHEN THEY HAVE SO OFTEN BEEN THE AGENTS OF EVIL, AND I THINK THAT I HAVE FULFILLED MY PROMISE OF GIVING YOU SOMETHING UNUSUAL FOR YOUR NOTE-BOOK. THREE-FORTY IS OUR TRAIN, AND I FANCY WE SHOULD BE BACK IN BAKER STREET FOR DINNER





ONLY ONE WORD OF
EPILOGUE. THE AMERICAN, ABE
SLANEY, WAS CONDEMNED TO
DEATH AT THE WINTER ASSIZES
AT NORWICH; BUT HIS PENALTY
WAS CHANGED TO PENAL SER-

VITUDE IN CONSIDERATION OF
MITIGATING CIRCUMSTANCES,
AND THE CERTAINTY THAT
HILTON CUBITT HAD FIRED THE
FIRST SHOT. OF MRS HILTON
CUBITT I ONLY KNOW THAT I



HAVE HEARD SHE RECOVERED
ENTIRELY, AND THAT SHE STILL
REMAINS A WIDOW, DEVOTING
HER WHOLE LIFE TO THE CARE
OF THE POOR AND TO THE AD-
MINISTRATION OF HER HUS-
BAND'S ESTATE.

END



IN THE SHADOW of **Sherlock Holmes**

A Biography of
**SIR ARTHUR CONAN
DOYLE**
by
GORDON DERRY

On returning to Edinburgh, Conan Doyle was busy preparing for final exams. He also started working as a doctor's assistant again. Somehow he found the time to write three more adventure stories. Two were published in a magazine called **London Society**, and the editor seriously urged him to give up medicine and take to a literary career.

At twenty-three, Conan Doyle graduated, a Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery.

Soon after this, in the fall of 1881, he was hired as ship's doctor again, this time on a freighter travelling to West Africa. Unlike the invigorating trip to the Arctic, this voyage was full of misfortune. The ship was wracked by violent storms; most of the passengers and many of the crew fell ill from malaria and fever, Conan Doyle himself almost died from typhoid fever; and lastly, a serious fire swept over the ship as it neared England.

Back in Edinburgh, Conan Doyle found himself in a desperate situation. He had given up the idea of going to sea again, but was unable to get a position at any hospital. He could not afford to set up a private practice. After a number of odd jobs and false starts, he finally sailed to Portsmouth in southern England, and opened an office in the nearby suburb of Southsea.

Patients for the new doctor were few and far between. With plenty of time on his hands, he wrote when the whim struck him. He produced a number of eerie stories that revealed his abiding fascination with the supernatural. They appeared in book form in an anthology entitled, **Dreamland and Ghostland**. Dealing with frustrated love, sexual obsession, and the return from death, these are powerful evocations of Conan Doyle's inner turmoil of the time. They represent a unique stage in his writing, for never again did he venture so vividly into the realm of gothic horror.

His younger brother, Innes, came to live with him, and Conan Doyle acted as the father the youth had never known. For several years the two brothers scraped by on next to nothing, as patients trickled in at an unfuriously slow rate.

During this period, Conan Doyle began to take an interest in spiritualism. Though he had rejected his Catholic faith, he had never become an atheist. Now he attended a series of lectures on psychic phenomena and spirit manifestations, and even attended a number of seances, held at the house of Major-General A.W. Drayson, a respected mathematician and astronomer, convinced him that psychic phenomena were real.

Business for the young doctor gradually picked up. He met a young woman while trying to save her brother from a fatal illness, and became deeply attracted to her. Her name was Louise Hawkins.



In August 1885, Arthur and Louise were married. He was twenty-six, she was twenty-seven. She was neither intellectually gifted nor well-read, but her calm straightforwardness was a perfect complement to his tormented, complex soul. He grew healthier, happier, and more comfortable. Louise had a small income of her own, and young women felt safer coming to see the doctor now that he was married.

It was at a time in his life when things were going well for him that Conan Doyle conceived of one of the most famous characters in fiction. He desired to create a detective who was the equal of his predecessors, Dupin and Lecoq -- but more fully fleshed and amusing. He borrowed the name **Holmes** from Oliver Wendell Holmes, a Bostonian writer whom he admired. There was a well-known violinist of the time named Alfred Sherlock, but it can only be speculated that this was the source of the fictional detective's first name.

Aside from the previously mentioned influences of Dr. Bell, Dupin and Lecoq, the character of Sherlock Holmes was based more than anything else on one side of Conan Doyle's own character. Prone to long, deep silences; in the habit of rising at odd hours; fascinated by crime and the grotesque side of humanity; chivalrous and eager to help the victimized innocent -- all these attributes are common to Conan Doyle and Holmes.

Watson, of course, was taken from the side of Conan Doyle that he showed to the public: they both graduated from university as doctors, within three years of each other; both were stricken with typhoid fever while abroad, Watson had the awkward, bumbling manner that Conan Doyle had around the cool, efficient Dr. Bell.

Though Conan Doyle never took drugs, his father must have resorted to them constantly to alleviate his epilepsy. It should be noted that Holmes stopped taking drugs in 1896, three years after Charles Doyle's death.

In 1886, Conan Doyle completed the book that truly started his literary career: "A Study in Scarlet", the first adventure of the great detective. After being turned down by a magazine and two book publishers, a third book publisher finally accepted it. The author was paid a pittance. It appeared in **Beeton's Christmas Annual** for 1887, a small paperback. Though it got several favorable reviews, the reception by the public was poor.

In 1888, the novel was published in book form by a more prestigious publisher, illustrated by Conan Doyle's father, Charles. These illustrations were done while Charles was in the asylum. It received greater attention this time, but was by no means a popular seller.

Next Conan Doyle turned to writing an historical novel, "Micah Clarke". Finished in 1888, it was published the following year, and was received favorably by critics and readers alike.

That same year, 1889, Conan Doyle's first child, a girl, was born.

Soon after, he was invited to London by an American publishing agent. Conan Doyle agreed to let **Lippincott's Magazine** publish the second Holmes adventure, "The Sign of the Four", in America.

Closely following this positive turn of events, Conan Doyle's next historical novel, "The White Company", was published as a serial in the British **The Cornhill Magazine**.

Despite his successes as a writer, Conan Doyle was still determined to maintain his medical career. In 1890 he went off to Berlin with a group of other doctors to study new findings in the cure of tuberculosis. On this journey, he met a dermatologist who advised him to abandon the struggle of general practice and become a specialist.

Returning to England, Conan Doyle collected his wife and took her with him to Vienna, where he enrolled in a course in ophthalmology, the study of the structure and diseases of the eye.

In the spring of 1891, he went back to London, where he set up private practice as an oculist. This venture proved to be a dismal failure. He had even more trouble attracting patients here than he'd had in Southsea eight years earlier. He wrote of this time:

"Every morning I walked from the lodgings at Montague Place, reached my consulting-room at ten and sat there until three or four, with never a ring to disturb my serenity. Could better conditions for reflection and work be found? It was ideal, and so long as I was thoroughly unsuccessful in my professional venture there was every chance of improvement in my literary prospects."

In July of that year, **The Strand Magazine** published the first of a series of six Sherlock Holmes stories that would later be published together in book form as "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes". By this time Conan Doyle had a literary agent handling his affairs.

The timing was perfect. When "A Scandal in Bohemia" saw print, **The Strand Magazine** was becoming immensely popular. A real-life scandal had just broken into the news, one that reached right up to the Prince of Wales. The public lapped it all up, and clamoured for more. With the fashionable illustrations of Sidney Paget to aid the process, Sherlock Holmes became a **star**.

"The Red-Headed League" was greeted with greater enthusiasm. Conan Doyle's agent negotiated a more lucrative contract for six further adventures of the great detective. By the end of 1891, Conan Doyle was earning from his writing four times what his annual income had been when he left Southsea. It was wholly without regret that, at this time, he gave up his medical career.

While the Holmes stories continued to increase in popularity, their author worked on a long historical novel, "The Refugees", about the Huguenots of France. He finished this in 1892, and immediately began yet another.

"The Great Shadow" was set in the Napoleonic era. There followed, in rapid succession, seventeen short stories. Eight of these were further adventures of Holmes. Conan Doyle also wrote an operetta in collaboration with James Barrie, author of "Peter Pan".

1892 ended happily with the birth of a son. However, there was a shadow falling over the Doyle household. Louise's health deteriorated steadily, with no apparent cause.

Worry over his wife's mysterious illness; exhaustion from the constant pressure of deadlines for the Holmes stories published regularly in **The Strand**; finding it more and more difficult to think up new puzzles -- these were the reasons for a strange turn of events that shook the reading public of the world far more than it did the author. In April 1893, Conan Doyle decided that Sherlock Holmes must die.



He took two trips to Switzerland, and during the first he vacationed near the Reichenbach Falls with the weakened Louise. Soon after, he wrote the infamous story, "The Final Solution", wherein Holmes perishes falling over those same falls. Later that year, he gave a lecture there on "Fiction as Part of Literature". The popularity of the Sherlock Holmes stories continued to grow, spreading across Europe and America as well as Britain.

There followed two tragic events: his father died in the asylum, and then Louise developed tuberculosis. She was given, by her doctors, only a few months to live.

Devastated, Conan Doyle refused to accept this prognosis. He decided to take his wife abroad to try an "open air" cure for the illness. He was in the sunny valley of Davos, Switzerland, when the December, 1893 issue of **The Strand** printed "The Final Solution".

The reaction was incredible. Over twenty thousand people immediately cancelled their subscriptions to the magazine. Young men wore black funeral bands and women dressed in mourning clothes. Even the Prince of Wales and Queen Victoria were upset. This all startled and befuddled Conan Doyle, for unlike his readers he refused to see Sherlock Holmes as a real person.

The Conan DoYLES spent the next two and a half years travelling, and Louise's sickness was kept in check for a time.

During this time, supported by the ever increasing income from his writing, Conan Doyle produced dozens of short stories and two more novels. "The Stark Munro Letters" is an autobiographical novel based on his difficult times in early 1891. "Rodney Stone" is another historical adventure.

In the winter of 1894, while his wife was convalescing at Davos in the Swiss Alps, Conan Doyle introduced the sport of skiing to Switzerland for the first time. People laughed when he predicted that one day hundreds of Englishmen would come to Switzerland for a ski season.

Two more books were written this year: "Round the Red Lamp", a collection of stories based on the theme of a doctor's life, and "The Parasite", his first literary excursion into the realm of spiritualism, which fascinated him more and more.

In the summer, he returned alone to England briefly, to produce a short play he wrote, "Waterloo". It was an extraordinary success. Riding high, Conan Doyle immediately penned another play. This one, however, titled "The House of Temperley", was to remain neglected in a drawer for a number of years.

In October, with his wife and children still at Davos, Conan Doyle left to sail to New York, where he was scheduled to give a series of lectures. The American audiences were charmed and fascinated with him. He liked both the people and the country very much. In every way, this tour was greatly successful.

In December, Conan Doyle returned to Switzerland to find the weather terrible and his wife the worse for it. They continued to live at Davos, however, until the fall of the next year.

continued next issue



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DITKO'S WORLD
featuring **STATIC**
No. 3 of 3

editor: Robin Snyder
story & artwork:
Steve Ditko

Ditko returns with his "hero for all peoples" The Question in a story entitled "My Son." Also this issue, Static appears in "The Polluter" and an all-new Science Fiction story "The Helmet." The heads come back again to continue their debate on justice. Only the genius of Steve Ditko could bring you all of this in one book! This is the final issue of the three issue mini-series "Static-Ditko's World." Be sure to watch for Ditko's new series, "Ditko's World," premiering this fall from Renegade Press.



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written by: Max Collins
drawn by: Terry Beatty,
with assistance by Gary Kato

"THE OTHER CHEEK" concludes.

It's back to "normal" as Ms. Tree throws her psychiatric cure down the drain and picks up her gun to avenge the death of an innocent.

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SILENT INVASION No. 3
written by: Larry Hancock
drawn by: Micheal Cherkas

"I Haven't Been to Stubbinsville in a Long, Long Time" Matt Sinkage is overcome by Kalashnikov's henchmen who drive off with Gloria Amber. Matt gives chase but the FBI, police and other mysterious agents pursue Matt. Bullets fly and fires rage as Gloria ends her quest near Stubbinsville.

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VICKI VALENTINE No. 4
written by: Bill Woggon
drawn by: Barb Rausch
"Vicki Valentine Summer and Fall Special"

This issue stars Vicki's designer of the season, Rinaldi Barnette. Angel Cake celebrates her birthday with Morrie Turner's "Wee Pals," plus pin-ups, paper dolls and cut-outs!!



FLAMING CARROT COMICS

FLAMING CARROT No. 13
story & art by: Bob Burden

The question, "Who is this guy, anyway?" continues to haunt the citizens, as the Carrot fights for truth and justice armed with nothing more than his super-pogo. Join our hero as he takes to the streets in search of adventure. **WARNING:** This book has been selling out quickly, so be sure and get plenty or you may miss out!!



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THE SILENT INVASION



DOWN, DOWN
AND AWAY!



